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CHILDREN'S LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

With Special Reference to India

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Just a Minute, please !

"Your children are not your children.

They are the sons and daughters of
Life's longing for itself.

They come through you but not from you,

And though they are with you, yet they belong not to you,

You may give them your love but not your thoughts,

For they have their own thoughts.

You may house their bodies but not their souls,

For their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow,
which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams.

You may strive to be like them,
but seek not to make them like you,

For life goes not backward nor tarries with yesterday.

You are the bows from which your children
as living arrows are sent forth,

.....

Let your bending in the archer's hand be for gladness.*

Khalil Gibran

*As quoted by A.S. Neill in Summerhill: A Radical Approach to Education , (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1973), p. XXii.

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PREFACE

Parents and teachers are very pleased and watch with pride when children tread on the roads leading to the world of books on their own. This is a strange world which is full of mystery for them and they like to uncover it for themselves. The day a child starts going to school, he is exposed to this wonderful world of books, which at that time mainly consists of textbooks. This is the only property of a school-going child in a country like ours. It is the only tool of education in his possession.

But this is not enough to satisfy his curiosity, to fulfil his needs or to quench his thirst for knowledge. A textbook does expose the child to a variety of learning situations, but it cannot give all that he needs. It may provoke his desire to know more about the world he lives in, and this may be a starting point for the search of truth, beauty and fun.

I have been intrigued many a time by a simple question thrown at me over and over again sometimes by the parents, sometimes by the teachers and many a time by the librarians: 'which' book should we buy for our children? I have heard parents complaining: "Oh! our child doesn't want to read any book — least of all a book in English. We do try to help him to get to read, but he just doesn't know a word!

We get tired and exhausted.... We don't know why he can't read and enjoy books the way many children do...."

This led me to believe that the parents need to be informed of the developmental characteristics of children at different ages and stages, and also of the factors which need consideration while selecting a book for them. Choosing books for children is a process based upon the knowledge of child development, learning and the field of children's literature.

While working in the National Council of Educational Research and Training, New Delhi, I had the opportunities of initiating, planning and co-ordinating many projects pertaining to textbooks and supplementary readers in languages. But the field of children's literature in English remained untouched, and this was making me feel uncomfortable. It was a painful revelation to find that nothing much was being done in this field by the educationists i.e., parents, teachers and librarians on one hand and authors, artists and publishers on the other. I consider all of them to be educationists because all of them contribute towards the education of children in one way or the other. The focus of attention was textbooks -- just the dull and drab textbooks. Parents were worried that their children were not interested in reading anything other than the books they were compelled to read. Teachers were concerned only with the courses of study prescribed by the

boards of examinations. Librarians were the only souls left to select books for children mainly because they had to exhaust the funds. The authors were shy of writing for children for the reason of being labeled 'children's writer'. The educationists were busy organizing and attending seminars and conferences, and discussing theories in the air. The situation was really disheartening.

This discomfort made me restless and I started looking around to find an answer to the question: When there is such a wealth of literature available for children, why don't they enjoy reading and possessing it?

The present study has been made with a purpose to describe and synthesize the knowledge about children's literature in English with special reference to the school-going children in India. The need to provide general reading material to children is universally recognized. This applies to the teaching and learning of mother tongue and the second language too. I have tried to answer the questions raised by parents and teachers by examining children's books as literature, and using theme, genre, projection of values and language and style as analytical categories.

This has been a difficult and stupendous task for me. I couldn't have completed it without the able guidance of my supervisor Dr. J.P.Kulshreshtha, Reader, Department of English, University of Allahabad. I take this opportunity of expressing my gratitude towards him.

I also wish to express my indebtedness towards Dr. M.C.Joshi, Reader, Department of English, University of Allahabad, for helping me as a supervisor after Dr. Kulshreshtha left the country to join his new assignment at the University of Calabar, Nigeria in September 1981.

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INDIRA KULSHRESHTHA

INTRODUCTION

Is there any thing as a children's book ? Is the children's book an art form, distinct from other fiction, having its own particular excellence? Or is it just the novel made easy, in which every thing is the same as in an adult book, only less so ?¹

Jill Palton Walsh has raised a basic question. Many authors have attempted to answer this question in several ways. For instance, according to John Rowe Townsend, the only definition of a children's book is that its name appears on a publishers list of children's books.² Some others hold that the distinction between the books for adults and the books for children is an artificial one, made primarily for the sake of classification. Such definitions are only partly true. Myles McDowell brings out the essential differences between fiction for children and adults in a more thoughtful manner in the following words :

Children's books are generally shorter; they tend to favour an active rather than a passive treatment, with dialogue and incident rather than description and introspection; child protagonists are the rule; conventions are much used; the story develops within a clear cut moral schematism which much adult

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1. Jill Palton Walsh. "The Rainbow Surface" in Times Literary Supplement, December 3, 1971, as quoted by Nyles McDowell in "Fiction for Children and Adults", Writers, Critics and Children edited by Geoff Fox et.al. (New York: Agathon Press 1976), p.140.
 2. John Rowe Townsend. A Sense of Story, (London: Longman, 1971). Ibid., p.141.

fiction ignores; children's books tend to be optimistic rather than depressive; language is child oriented; plots are of a distinctive order; probability is often disregarded; and one could go on endlessly talking of magic and fantasy, and simplicity and adventure.³

Children's literature is an interesting and fascinating world of books where they can enter freely and need no other guide than the author himself. These are the books that reflect values and mores of society which produce them. Obviously, children's literature is not the concern of children alone. Parents, teachers and librarians on one hand, and authors, illustrators and publishers on the other are potential judges of books for children. There are questions of suitability and vocabulary, of themes and genre which jostle with personal likes and dislikes.

Children's literature is a part of general literature. According to Paul Heins,

....even at the risk of over-emphasizing the notion of branches, children's literature may be said to be a branch on the tree of literature.⁴

Eleanor Cameron supports this point in the following words :

Children's literature does not exist in a world of its own, but is enmeshed in a larger world of literature.⁵

3. Ibid., pp. 141-142.

4. Paul Heins, Crosscurrents of Criticism, (Boston: The Horn Book Inc., 1977), p.83.

5. Eleanor Cameron as quoted by Jane Yole, in The Writer, February 1973, p.5.

And if children's literature is a part of all literature, then the screening, evaluation and criticism of children's literature also becomes a part of the screening, evaluation and criticism of all literature. A children's book also deserves to be probed as much as an adult book for general questions of theme, genre, diction, structure, significance of detail, literary integrity etc., because one always wonders if a particular book written for children would appeal to them. This question is especially pertinent when it is related to children's literature in English with special reference to India. Now-a-days there is no dearth of such books for children in our country, but the perennial question forces its way up into our minds: is all that material suitable for school going children in India ?

So far as reading is concerned, Indian children are made to suffer the storm cloud of examinations, hanging there dark and sinister, like the sword of Damocles, night and day till the only thing they are left with in their brains is the 'sheer worry' of the 'cloud'. The schools keep them busy in such all-life tests that they find no time whatsoever for personal development or leisure time interests and activities. Could such schools be really expected to be turning out good citizens, let alone 'human beings in the real sense of the word' ? Would not more training in 'reading for pleasure' be equally important to society as well as to develop aesthetic

sense in children, and also to broaden their emotional and other experiences ?

These were some of the basic questions which prompted this study to be taken up. Another major point in consideration was the national policy regarding the teaching of English in India. The trend in most educational systems upto about 1950 was to regard language as a natural part of education. It was also insisted that schooling at primary level be through the vernacular. There was a demand for radical improvement in language learning, as there was a wish to exploit young child's supposedly greater language learning abilities, as also the desire to enrich the educational experience of primary school children.

The international meetings organised by the UNESCO Institute of Education, Hamburg in 1962 and 1966, and then in 1967 and 1969 demonstrated sustained interest in several aspects of second language teaching and bilingual education for young children for many areas of the world. It also emphasised the need for imperical and evaluative research and more factual survey data. Experimentation has continued ever since then and has taken new directions: what began as lowering the starting age for second language with adjustments in teaching methods and curriculum material, now includes various forms of bilingual education.

The 'recent trends' in various countries can be noted through a study made by Stern and Weinrib. In U.S.A. there is a marked decrease in Foreign Language in Elementary School Programmes (Fernandez 1973) e.g. :

The field is faced with a myriad of problems while seeking its place in the education for our youth. It is faced with financial problems, lack of sufficiently trained teachers, a sometime unsympathetic unilingual audience, and a lack of well developed sequential foreign language materials...⁶

Bilingual education in U.S.A. has two fold purposes: to establish the right to use and retain vernacular in education, and to provide a more humane and pedagogically sound language by ethnic minorities.

People in Canada have special impetus because of two official languages - English and French. The report of the Independent Study of Language Training in the Public Service (1976) suggests that ultimately the future of language in Canada lies in better second language education in schools.⁷

The British educators got interested in language in primary schools around 1960. A pilot scheme for teaching French in schools was launched in 1963. The feasibility of languages within the primary Schools was demonstrated by

6. H.H. Stern and Alice Weinrib in "Foreign Languages for Younger Children: Trends and Assessment", as quoted by Valerie Kinsella. Language Teaching and Linguistic Surveys, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1978), p. 154.

7. Ibid., p. 156.

the 'pilot study' : 'no negative effect' on the work of primary schools was shown, though its effect as a stimulus to other languages in secondary schools was disappointing. The NEFR report denied that pupils taught French from the age of eight revealed any substantial gain in achievement when compared with pupils who started three years later.

As such, in Britain there has been confrontation between one view favouring continuation of languages in primary education and another which firmly rejects French as useful contribution to foreign language learning in schools.

In France the first nation enquiry to determine the extent of early language teaching was made in 1964-65. Another enquiry was made by Giard in 1974. Teachers were asked to assess various aspects of early second language learning at the primary level, based on their experiences with students learning a second language at the primary stage. Majority favoured the early language learning and felt that pupils were benefitted from their early experiences.

English occupies a very special place in the educational and administrative structure of India. It has a creditable importance as compared to the study of mother tongue, acquiring a recognisable place in the school curriculum. The Radhakrishnan Commission has reported :

English is the means of preventing our isolation from the world, and we will act unwisely if we allow

ourselves to be enveloped in the folds of dark curtains of ignorance. A sense of oneness of the world is in the making, and control over the medium of expression which is more widespread and has a larger reach than any of our language today, will be of immense benefit to us.⁸

In our country the three language formula has been accepted as a national policy. A child according to the framework of the curriculum of ten plus two education at the completion of ten year schooling should be competent in the first language (mother tongue), be able to understand and express himself in the second language (regional language), and be able to comprehend the third language in its printed form. The third language should usually be English, though it could also be any other foreign language.

With this position of English in our school curriculum, there is hardly a chance for a child to enrich command over English language except through reading because its teaching is restricted to a great extent. While success of a child in mustering his native language is forgranted, the circumstances and success of the second language cannot be predicted so easily. A child automatically learns the first language (mother tongue) as this is the only effective way of expressing his needs and desires or sentiments and feelings,

8. Preparation and Evaluation of Textbooks in English,
(New Delhi: National Council of Educational Research
and Training, 1970), p.9

whereas in learning a second language this compulsion is missing. It is perceived through the habit channels of his native language. Thus English has been assigned a functional role in our educational system. It is primarily a 'library language' through which a learner gains an access to the ever growing accretions to difficult fields of knowledge.

Indian children are exposed to literature in English within these limitations. And this is enough reason to discover some standards by which children's books, as a part of literature, can be so judged. Children's books do not exist in vacuum, devoid of and unrelated to literature as a whole. In evaluating children's books, the conviction should be: this 'is' literature of value and of significance. This is an essential approach. These books need to be discussed as literature and not as tools or commodities. Children's literature, according to Lillian Smith

is not a pedantic or an academic study. It is joyous, fruitful and essentially a rewarding field.⁹

Hence the purpose of looking at these books critically may not be the 'dry analysis' but the joy of discovering the skill of author in attracting the child and sustaining his interest.

9. Lillian Smith, The Unreluctant Years, (Chicago: American Library Association, 1953), pp. 7-8.

The role of literature is to help develop the individual and it takes a good book to do this. A poor book takes the child and puts him back a step or two, a mediocre book takes the child and leaves him where he is. A good book promotes an awareness of the possibilities of life, the awakening of response.¹⁰

Gregson has observed that,

some teachers have the attitude: it does not matter what they (children) read so long as they read.¹¹

This view remains so widespread that it deserves consideration. In two important respects it seems to be acceptable and sound. In the first place, it lays stress on 'enjoyment' as the essential ingredient in reading, and in the second, it indirectly suggests that active participation by the reader is necessary if books are to become a vital part in life. He goes on to add :

It is certainly possible to enjoy poor books. The fact that almost every child does read such books is no reason for abandoning any notion of standards... I cannot agree with those who would make authors such Blyton, Saville, Johns and even Richards unavailable to children.... This literature is certainly not harmful; it has provided enjoyment for millions of children and helped to create reading habit for them.¹²

This argument seems to be an extreme as it 'is' desirable to examine books before they are passed on to children because

10. Shiela Egoff, as quoted in The Writer, (Feb. 1973), p.5.

11. J.M.Gregson, English (London: Macmillan, 1973), p.144.

12. Ibid., p.145.

a poor book is as capable of developing a distaste for reading as a good book is of developing a love for reading. In case of Indian children it is all the more necessary because English is not their mother tongue and if once they develop a distaste for reading books in English, it would be difficult to persuade them to read such books later on. There are more children's books available now-a-days than ever before. Many of them set extremely high standards and are quite cheap too. The variety is so bewildering that teachers often tend to complain that there are too many. In view of this situation it seems a pity that any child should grow up to think of reading as another bit of unwelcome drudgery that may be imposed on him by his school or any one else.

Children's literature is a very complex area and it is difficult to consider all the aspects at one time. The aim here is to weigh as literature certain children's books which by and large represent various kinds of reading interests of school going children and to indicate the necessity for a critical study of children's literature in English, not so much for approval or rejection, as for the guidance of authors, publishers and artists, or even teachers, librarians and parents.

This is not to say that there should be a narrow and stultifying concentration on 'realism' and 'relevance' to the exclusion of imaginative stories. The key point is :

it is the 'right' kind of book which should be given to the child at the 'right' time in order to awaken his interest in books, and for this purpose a careful selection, attractively arranged and frequently changed, is an invitation which most children cannot resist. Hence the need to have an examination of children's books in English that can be used by the school going children in India as and when they want to do so, may be to fruitfully utilize their leisure time, or to satisfy their unsatiated desire to 'know' more about every thing around them.

It is hoped that this study will ultimately lead to the point where one can begin wondering as to 'what' and 'how' to write in English for Indian children as also how to distinguish a tree in the forest i.e. how to select a good book for them from amongst so many that are scattered around.

CHAPTER I

CHILDREN AND BOOKS

A void exists in the knowledge of books and serial publications about children's literature among those who are interested and involved in this area. In India an absence of a critical study in children's literature in English is a very serious gap. In the present study the focus is on examining critically the same with special reference to the school-going Indian children. The analytical categories for this study constitute of theme, genre, projected values, and the language and style of children's books available in India.

Books are not the substitute for living. They can, however, add charm and purity to its beauty and make it more significant for human beings. They offer relief when life seems to be difficult, even though this relief is temporary; they give a new insight into problems, when life becomes troublesome; and they provide us with desired rest and refresh us when life becomes intricate and unbearable. They are the source of fun, entertainment and pleasure on one hand, and the media of information and knowledge on the other. They are our best friends. This is as true for children as it

is for adults - oh yes ! it is true, particularly for children.

The most honoured definition of the 'function of literature' is that it gives profit and delight, and by this definition children's literature has given as much profit and delight as any other kind of literature. To be sure, children are impressionable creatures, accepting souls, and when given a book, will derive from it as much profit and delight as they can.¹

During the last two decades the authors, editors, artists and publishers have joined hands in making children's literature so full of variety to enjoy and so beautiful to look at, that children apart, even the adults feel tempted to read them. There is a large number of books available ranging from unreliable, trashy and dull to immaculately accurate and permanently significant.

As far back as 1952, talking about children's books in America, Colby recorded :

Each year one thousand or more new books are published for children when you have this number coming out year after year you are bound to get a lot of mediocre, even poor, books.²

This was not so much a prophecy as an incisively accurate observation on the rapidly growing and lucrative business

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1. Roger Sale, Fairy Tales and After (London: Harvard University Press, 1978), p.3.
 2. Jean Poindexter Colby, The Children's Book Field (New York: Pellegrini, 1952), p.191.

of producing books for children. For teachers, parents and children it has become very difficult to buy intelligently from the current 'title' wave.

From 1952 to 1980, the exercise of judgment in selecting children's books has become even more difficult. In England the Department of Education has issued two significant publications in this regard. These are : The School Library (1952; revised edition 1967) and The Use of Books (1964). There, the Public Library Act (1964) makes it the duty of every library authority to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all. Alec Ellis has further recorded :

In order to satisfy the need for adequately qualified children's librarian, the Library Association in its syllabus of examinations has included papers in both its Post Graduate and Final Examination on the Bibliography and Librarianship of Literature for Children.³

In America the librarians are making an earnest effort to divide up the publications among themselves and read as many of them as possible before ordering them for their libraries. There is the Children's Catalog which began in 1909, and which is a quarterly supplement, edited by an advisory committee consisting of children's librarians and instructors of children's literature; then there is the

3. Alec Ellis, How to Find Out About Children's Literature (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1973), p.3.

Elementary School Library Collection on similar lines based on surveys of elementary school curricula, textbooks and the like. There are a good number of bibliographies of selected children's books available in the market. Mary Meacham has given a long list of these bibliographies in her book.⁴

Still there is no way for a complete and reliable analysis of every book produced. Magazines reviewing children's literature do not have that much room or that large a staff to offer reviews on all books. Further, many reviews tend to be arbitrary because no definite evaluative criteria are used: personal whim or fancy provides the judgment. For example, Colby feels that under 'easy reading' books for the 6 to 9 age group, children are being offered poor reading material : "Junket is nice, but not when you get out of junket age."⁵

This is one person's judgment based on her sensibility for what children in the 6 to 9 age group need. What is required is to help teachers, parents and authors as well to arrive at informed judgment about what children require

⁴. Mary Meacham, Information Sources in Children's Literature (London : Greenwood Press, 1978), pp.15-18.

⁵. Jean Poindexter Colby, op.cit., p.194.

in various age groups in different categories of books they read, and whether what is being offered to them is up to the mark.

The European scene is marked by similar helplessness about selecting children's literature. Over the years the market for children's books, particularly school library market and school use of children's books in class work has expanded tremendously. The market is responsible for the great increase in the number of books published for children. And yet, parents and teachers have no way of finding out what to select and recommend for children.

The Indian situation is even more challenging. The number of children in the elementary and middle schools in India is so large that many publishers have been attracted to the field because it is quite lucrative. An increasing number of series in the last ten years from private publishing houses bears out this fact e.g., 'Amar Chitra Katha', 'Folk Tales of India', 'Folk Tales of the World', 'Echo Books', 'Chaturang Katha', 'Let Us Know India', 'Understanding Science', etc. Hardly a season passes that does not see another addition.

In short, there may be treasures which need to be sought for, but books are already there - a wealth of books - old and new, fiction and non-fiction. There are a number of good reasons why it is necessary to select books for children.

One reason being that while so much is available which is of good quality, there is even more which is not; and much of this larger section may have a detrimental effect upon its readers. Surely, it is not wrong to desire the best for one's children when it is realized that the impressions they absorb will remain for life. In order to find the best out of the available books for children, some standards of judgment are required. According to May Hill Arbuthnot, two facts need to be kept in mind :

A book is a good book for children only when they enjoy it; a book is a poor book for children, even when adults rate it as classic, if the children are unable to read it or are bored by its contents.⁶

This statement is quite significant so far as the development of reading habits is concerned. It is wrong to believe that all children can be filled with a love of literature, but it is even more nonsensical to believe that books cannot find a place of any kind in the lives of many children. May Hill Arbuthnot goes on to suggest that

we must know hundred of books in many fields and their virtues and limitations, but we must also know the children for whom they are intended - their interests and needs.⁷

6. May Hill Arbuthnot, Children and Books (Chicago : Scott Foresman and Company, 1957), p.2.

7. Ibid., p.2.

The Need for Children's books

There are certain needs of the children which can be satisfied by books. The psychologists have identified their needs and the following ones can be taken care of through books.

1. Sense of Security : There are several needs that literature can help to fulfil. Books can provide a sense of security - one of the basic drives of human beings. The child's sense of material security precedes his sense of emotional security. He feels it for the first time in the loving care of his parents and gradually goes on to find it in his regular routines of eating and sleeping, caresses and embraces — everything that gives him comfort and a sense of protection.

For children as well as for adults, this sense of material satisfaction is important. The age old fairy tales were told by people who neither had enough to eat nor had sufficient clothes to keep themselves warm during the chilly nights of winters. But the heroes of their tales had sumptuous and appetising meals, beautiful and gorgeous dresses to wear, comfortable and splendid palaces to live in, and above all, they had glittering and expensive

jewels to adorn themselves. What they could not achieve in their lives, they enjoyed in their imagination and indirectly satisfied their sense of material security. This has been a powerful and leading idea in their stories.

But beyond this level of comfort and safety, is the deeper sense of satisfaction which comes through emotional security. The stories of home and family, of pets and animals, of love and affection are popular with children of almost all ages. However poor and unhappy the characters of the story may be, they provide a sense of emotional security to the child reader, if they are bound with a string of love and loyalty.

To achieve a sense of intellectual security is another basic need which has got to be satisfied. It implies the need to derive accurate knowledge which can be fulfilled through books. It is an urge both in children and adults, and it deserves to be catered to. Mostly for this reason only the adults buy such books for children which would give them information, which would tell them about correct social behaviour, which would provide them with knowledge about applied sciences, about wild animals, about the children in other parts of the world, about birds, about plants, and so on and so forth.

2. Sense of Belongingness : Once the child feels secure in the hands of his parents, he feels the desire to be accepted by society as a member of a group. What begins with him as 'my ma', 'my papa', is extended to 'my brother', 'my sister', 'my friend', 'my neighbour', 'my teacher', 'my school', and ultimately to 'my country', and perhaps even further to the world as a whole. It ends up in the concept of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' (वासुधैव कुटुम्बकम्), i.e., the universe is a family.

The books for children can reflect this ever expanding sense of group, and belongingness. If they tell about people of other races, creeds, and nations, they must be honestly written and appealingly represented.

3. Sense of Achievement : Another strong drive in human beings is to do something which may bring them satisfaction and through which they may command respect, love and commendation. The child, in the beginning sees his mother who can make his dresses, who can prepare tasty food for him and who can do so many things for everyone in the house; he watches his father performing jobs in the home and outside, bringing sweets and toys for him, and teaching and guiding his elder brothers and sisters and so on.

Then he is introduced to the world of books. Now his hero is the brave little rabbit, who makes the lion jump into the well, or the tortoise who is slow and steady to win the race with the hare, or Eklavya who worships the image of his teacher Dronacharya and learns to aim so perfectly. He loves any story which is full of action.

Then there are characters who conquer a bad temper, who win the fears and who do away with laziness and incompetence. Their interest in such characters lead them to the world of biographies of such people as Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Nehru, Swami Vivekanand, Guru Govind Singh, Maharani Lakshmi Bai, and the like. Biographies written with little anecdotes from the lives of the great, their struggle against weaknesses and other odds help to satisfy the child's quest for achievement.

The children need to learn that although achievement is always present, it is perhaps most satisfying when it is reached after defeat. Growing up means growing. ⁸

4. Need to Love and Being Loved : It is but human to love and be loved in turn. It is a pressing need and if one is frustrated in one direction, he finds out its

substitute in another. A child learns the first lesson of love and affection in his family. The child coming from a family which has a normal relationship, begins his life with healthy attitudes. If otherwise, his approach to other people might be suspicious. Such children find solace and substitutes to their drive to love and be loved in the stories pertaining to happy family life, and it may give them an insight what families are like.

Another dimension of this need to love and be loved leads to its recognition in other creatures too. Animal stories where they defend or protect their mates or young, are extremely appealing to them. Aesop's fables, Jataka tales, and the stories of Panchatantra are well loved by children all over.

5. Desire for Change : The desire for change is "one of the basic needs of human organism."⁹ After a hard day's work we need rest and relaxation. Seriousness has to be followed by gaiety. This holds true to reading books also. After grave and factual reading of text books, children need something light and refreshing - something full of imagination, suspense, or thrill to go through. Books of different kinds can be used for a healthy change.

9. William E. Blatz et. al. Parents and Pre-School Child (New York: Morrow, 1929), p.114.

6. Need for Aesthetic Satisfaction : This is another strong drive of human nature - the desire to adorn, to make things beautiful, and to enjoy beauty. Keats has rightly said : "A thing of beauty is a joy forever". The young children get attracted by colourful books, by the reds and blues, by the greens and yellows, and the artist can give the entire sequence of the story running through a number of pages in one long, clear view so that the details can be seen in relation to the complete design.

Aesthetic satisfaction can be secured in one form or another at different levels of taste. When a child has giggled and chuckled over 'Humpty Dumpty had a great fall', he is getting ready to enjoy and appreciate both humour and beauty of Alice in Wonderland or to accept the tragedy of 'Abhimanyu'.

7. Books as a Source of Guidance : In order to educate the young ones, books of many kinds are required - books which can be a source of guidance both for the parents and for the children.

Know your child and know his books, because for every child there is the right book at the right time¹⁰,

says May Hill Arbuthnot.

10. May Hill Arbuthnot, op.cit., p.14.

Russel, at the same time lists eight important outcomes of reading books on the growth and development of the child, as under¹¹:

- i. extension and enrichment of children's experience of complex ways of man's living,
- ii. giving opportunities to re-live and experience the adventure and ideas of others,
- iii. gaining insight into one's own personality and problems,
- iv. providing materials which help to create an appreciation and understanding of the problems of others,
- v. the development of love of country and domestic ideas,
- vi. the discovery of ethical values which are common to different creeds and which form a foundation of good character in the modern world,
- vii. providing opportunities for fun and escape, and
- viii. the development of worthwhile tastes and a permanent interest in 'good' literature.

Huck and Young rightly define the purposes of literature for children :

Children seek truth about the world and its people; they want to know themselves and where they belong. To see their own lives clearly, children need to look into the contrasting experiences of others. They want to know what is 'right' in their society. Literature communicates these cultural values. Children also sense a need to discover the common elements in human experiences. They search

11. D.H.Russel, Children Learn to Read (New York : Ginn and Company, 1949), p. 283.

for inner peace and understanding of the universe. These purposes may be satisfied in the world of books.¹²

She further goes on to add that children will "turn to whatever is available in their search for truth, fun and beauty."

It must not be forgotten that one's first responsibility is to develop a love of reading in children. With time, good taste will grow naturally from having achieved this objective and it will not be compromised by the occasional reading by a teacher in the class. Nevertheless, the right atmosphere must be developed systematically. Reading should be exciting, absorbing, delightful, humorous, even frightening - and there are many splendid books in the market today capable of showing this to children.

Survey of Children's Literature:

Today there is a literature for children which never existed before in the history of mankind. Revolving racks in drug stores, supermarkets, train depots, and airports, display brightly illustrated books designed to attract young readers.¹³

Each year one thousand or more new books are published for children. That number is large from anyone's point of view : That of the publishers, the authors, the artists, the booksellers, the librarians, and the reviewers.

12. Charlotte S. Huck and Doris A. Young, Children's Literature in the Elementary School (New York : Holt Rinehart and Winston, 1976), p.2.

13. Ibid., p.40.

It is even large for the consumers; the children themselves.¹⁴ Colby supports them in this way.

Alec Ellis records : "At the present time, approximately 2,300 new children's books are being published in this country (England) alone."¹⁵

In our country too, there is no dearth of children's books now-a-days. The market seems to be flooded with them. Children's book fairs and World book fairs are organized in the country from time to time, and one can witness hundreds and thousands of children fluttering like butterflies over the blossoming flowers of colourful books.

Children's Literature before 1947

The position of children's literature in our country was different three decades ago. Children of today have wonderful books as compared to those before Independence. There were hardly a few books available which children could read and enjoy even in their mother tongue. The case was almost disheartening in the area of English. If at all, books from foreign publishers were passed on to them. They could hardly enjoy them because if the language of these books was easy, the children were quite grown up to accept the themes and the concepts that were dealt with in

14. Jean Poindexter Colby, op.cit., p.191.

15. Alec Ellis, op.cit.,p.2.

them; and if the concepts were understandable, the language was rather too difficult to be followed by them. Moreover, the Jacks and Jills over the hills, the snow flakes covering the meadows, the advance era and atmosphere of these books made the background quite alien to the children of India and they failed to visualize things or enjoy reading them.

There are a few reasons that can be held responsible for this kind of neglect on the part of the grown ups :

- i. Indian publishers were not conscious of the need to produce books especially meant for children. Anything that was printed in big type size was considered to be suitable for them. Even though stories from Panchatantra, Aesop's fables, or Jatakas were available in a scattered form in the mother tongue, little attention was paid to put them together for children, even in the mother tongue - leave aside write them in English.

- ii. There was a tendency to write 'down' the books for children, if ever an attempt was made in this direction. Every story ended up with a moral. Children were not treated as individuals - they were looked down as inferiors, and anything that the adults thought would 'teach' them, give them advice, or infuse 'moral' in them, was considered suitable. It was hardly realized that

children may be immature individuals, but they are 'unflinching critics'. They know beyond

doubt what they like and make no allowances. And that is chastening reflection.¹⁶

iii. There was hardly a 'class of authors' who specialized in writing for children and stories like Cabulliwallah by Rabindra Nath Tagore, The Lost Child by Mulkraj Anand, or Idgah by Munshi Prem Chand (Hindi) were written once in a while. They were more psychological expositions of children's feelings than stories written for them. In Cabulliwallah, Tagore tries to express the filial feelings of the Pathan towards Mini, whom he identifies with his own daughter in Kabul, the spontaneous response of Mini towards his love, and in the end the author's realization of his love and feelings on the eve of Mini's wedding. In The Lost Child Mulkraj Anand very beautifully portrays the desire of the child for the toys and sweets while he goes to see the fair and how he refuses to accept those very things after he is separated from his parents and keeps on repeating "I want my mother ! I want my father !" And in Idgah Prem Chand tells the story of a little boy Hamid who has lost his parents. He lives with his grand-mother, who is poor and barely manages to give two paise to Hamid for buying something for himself in the fair. Hamid, on the other hand, is more concerned and worried about his old grandmother, who gets burnt every time she cooks chapaties.

16. Water de la Mare as quoted by Indira Kulshreshtha, Supplementary Readers : Preparation and Evaluation (New Delhi : NCERT, 1972), p.19.

In the end the sense of affection and responsibility wins all his temptations towards other things in the fair as opposed to his friends. He simply buys a tong for his grandmother. But even these types of stories were very few.

In fact, writing for children was not taken seriously and was not treated with so much honour as was bestowed on the authors who wrote for adults. Monica Keifer says :

Children everywhere were treated not as undeveloped beings, but as ignorant men and women, and nothing was written especially for the needs of the immature minds..... Even those writers who did devote some time were apologetic for thus wasting their talents. John Bunyan, for instance, began his Book for Boys and Girls with the words:

'To those who are in the years but babes
I bow My pen to teach them.

What the letter be.

And how they may improve their ABC'¹⁷

This holds true to Indian scene as well. Can we name one author of children's books in India who has enjoyed the same position or status as was enjoyed by Devki Nandan Khatri or Bhartendu Harish Chandra who had started an era in Hindi literature ? We cannot prepare a list of writers like Daniel Defoe, R.L. Stevenson, Hans Christian Andersen, Beatrix Potter, or Rudyard Kipling in India, who had devoted their lives and spent their energy in enriching

17. Monica Keifer, American Children Through Their Books (Philadelphia : University of Pennsylvania Press, 1948), p.7.

children's literature - at least not in the pre-Independence era. This was the dull, prosaic and dark scene on the stage before 1947 and the child was lost in the background.

Children's Literature After 1947

Books by Indian publishers

And then the scene changed. The dim light on the stage faded away and the focus was on a small, frail child, who looked expectantly at the heaps of books in the library, who searched the shelves with his small hands, tried to pick up the books that were 'heavy' for him - heavy, due to the bulk and also in terms of their content; he rejected them and again started his search. He continued to pick up the books, glance through them, and ultimately keep them aside in total despair, till the attention of the educationist was drawn towards him. The educationist had been watching him indifferently upto now, as he was busy solving some other problems. He pondered over the situation for some time, and then made up his mind to 'do' something for the benefit of the 'poor child' !

And then there was a 'wave' of consciousness and a certain amount of concern for children cropped up in the air. The child became the centre of attention. His needs became as important as those of the adults. The dawn of

Independence brought some light for the child and the dewy tears were washed away by the multicoloured rays of the morning sun.

There came a marked difference in the attitudes of the publishers, authors and illustrators as the educationists started paying more attention to the 'need based' preparation of reading material for the young ones. Gradually the shyness and hesitation of being labelled as an 'author of children's books' gave way to more sophisticated class of writers who wrote books for children.

The publishers, writers and artists joined forces to make efforts in bringing out books especially designed and written for children. The educationists and psychologists projected the needs of children to help the authors think in terms of children as individuals who could make great demands on them because of their limitations but with insatiable desire to 'know' about everything.

All of them started thinking in terms of making the child familiar with the culture, traditions and the rich heritage of the country. There was a lot of hustle and bustle around. New institutions - both government and private - came up with speed e.g., National Book Trust, National Council of Educational Research and Training, Children's Book Trust, Bal Bhavan, etc. Thus, all of a sudden, the child became an all-important factor during

the time of 'Chacha Nehru'. The bud started blossoming into a 'red rose', that was very dear to him, that was always close to his heart.

These institutions got busy in planning how to go about the whole affair, e.g., as long back as 1963, when the NCERT was just a year-old Institution, it decided to take up projects on "Why, What, and How to Write for Children". About 4,000 children's books in Hindi, English, Bengali, Kannada, Punjabi, and Gujarati were screened with a view to preparing annotated bibliographies, which could be useful in selecting good reading material for children of various age groups. The researcher had initiated these projects and as such was closely associated with them and similar programmes, and felt that these reviews were not absolutely free from subjectivity, though sincere efforts were made to review these books objectively.

These institutions organised symposiums, seminars and conferences from time to time where the authors, editors, publishers and educationists gathered together to take account of what literature was already available and what needed to be prepared. The growing consciousness resulted in a flow of innumerable titles produced especially for children not only by these organizations, but also by private publishers, who found the business lucrative and conditions favourable.

Now there was a glut of children's books in the market resulting from the efforts to publishing a series of books on different aspects such as folk tales, mythological stories, Indian classics retold, stories from Panchatantra, Aesop's fables, fiction with historical background and so on. These books were sometimes written originally in English, but very often translated from regional languages. Publishers of repute like India Book House, Thomson Press, Children's Book Trust, National Publishing House, Macmillan Company of India, Oxford University press, etc. got interested in this 'big business'. With the result, a large number of books started flowing continuously towards the shops, libraries, and were rather overcrowded on the display boards. India Book House specialized in bringing out the series of picture books, viz., 'Amar Chitra Katha', and 'Chaturang Katha' both, in English and in Hindi; National Book Trust in planning a number of books under the series 'Nehru Bal Pustakalaya' being published in 14 regional languages as well as in English; Children's Book Trust in bringing out both English and Hindi versions of their publications and so on.

But this created another problem: Was all this published material worthwhile for children? Could it really satisfy the needs of the children for whom it was

being written? The librarians, teachers, and the parents were in a fix as to how to select and buy books for children.

National Council of Educational Research and Training launched projects for the evaluation of textbooks in all subject areas in 1971, but in 1972 the need was felt to screen and evaluate language supplementary readers as well. It was in 1975 that a project on Auxilliary Reading Material in English was taken up by the researcher, and the supplementary readers of Kerala were examined. At this time the need was keenly felt to examine children's books in English, that were available in the market, and prepare a list of selected reading material in English. Since English is a second language in our country, it needed special treatment. However, in another project initiated by the researcher, over one thousand books were reviewed by teachers from different schools of various states and selected books were recommended for various school stages.

Books by Foreign Publishers

Some Indian publishers like Macmillan Company of India, Orient Longman and Oxford University Press, etc., have ventured to bring out a series of Indian editions of foreign publications in collaboration with their publishers. The 'Classics Retold' series and the abridged

versions of famous English novels are now available in the market.

The original foreign publications are beautifully illustrated and flawlessly printed, and they attract our children more than anything else, though their price is on the higher side. Most of the children studying in public schools are drawn to them.

At the same time there are publishers who have taken a step ahead and they are even trying to get children's books written in conformity with the syllabuses prepared by various Boards of Education. This makes their field wider because these books can be recommended for extensive reading in the schools - both public and government.

Present Trends and Fads

Writing for children, in the early sixties, was taken lightly both by publishers and writers. Robinson has remarked :

Over and over again women and men, too, though even more rarely because they are surer of themselves, come to me saying, 'I don't know enough to write a book for adults, and so I would like to try a book for children.' And I tell them that when they have learnt enough to write for an adult perhaps a child will listen to them.¹⁸

18. M.L.Robinson, Writing for Young People (New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1950), p.12.

This statement of Robinson seems to be partially true. It is reasonable to say that the authors took writing for children very lightly, but it is not fair to presume that more women approached him because they were not sure of themselves. It could be possible that it was only women who ever thought of writing for children because they felt to be closer to them, and men thought, they were more competent to write for adults. However, apart from this controversy, the fact remains that writing for children was perhaps not taken seriously.

Still, the field for children's books has expanded amazingly in the last twenty years. The flow of new children's literature continued unabated during the past two decades, the first decade of which witnessed the emergence of writers who concentrated on fairy tales and folk tales. Beginning writers invariably produce fairy tales. Good reasons lie behind this tendency. As Robinson further remarks :

He has forgotten how interesting reality can be. He has nothing much to say about things as they are. He has been fed on adult fairy stories so long himself that he has only dulled recognition of the truth. And finally, ¹⁹ he does not know enough to handle reality.

19. Ibid, p.13.

It is interesting to note that in our country, selection of themes has been a matter of 'wave'. If Rajpal & Sons decided to bring out the folk tales of India in Hindi, National Book Trust brought out a series entitled 'Folklore of India' with a view to providing factual information regarding Bengal, Orissa, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, and Assam, for the readers in regions other than that dealt with, and to promoting inter-regional understanding. Sterling Publishers claim that theirs was the first attempt to compile the colourful and fascinating folk tales of the different regions of the country. Their series of folk tales consists of 21 books (covering all the states of India), and the series on the 'Folk Tales of the World' consists of 10 books regarding the neighbouring countries of India, i.e., Thailand, Nepal, Pakistan, Burma, Indonesia, Turkey, Iran, Malaysia, Sri Lanka and Tibet. They have folk tales of Bangla Desh and Mauritius in the press. Other publishers did not lag behind. 'Folk Tales of Rajasthan' (Rajpal & Sons), 'Folk Tales from India' (Hemkunt Press, New Delhi), etc., were also published in early seventies.

Then there was a trend to bring out the 'classics' for children, e.g., 'Tales from Indian Classics' (Hemkunt Press), 'Treasury of Indian Tales' (Children's Book Trust, New Delhi), in three volumes, etc.

Religion and mythology occupied another important area, and India Book House (Bombay) got the prominence by bringing out over a few hundred books under the pictorial series 'Amar Chitra Katha' and 'Chaturang Katha', the former being based on the Indian mythology, history and legends and the latter on Indian classics.

In the later half of the last decade, the trend was to provide educational books for children - where 'Let Us Know India' (India Book House) was planned to provide a complete view of India for children between 8 to 15 years of age; 'Echo' series (India Book House) claims to be a treasure house of folk and animal lore, mythology, historical tales and modern Indian series of mystery and adventure, puzzles, games and animal tales. Ratna-Bharti Prakashan (Bombay) also brought out a good number of books on social studies, e.g., 'The Story of Ganga', 'The Story of Jamuna', etc.

A most remarkable trend has been to edit classics from English literature for children and bring out a series of the most famous books. As a result, books like Around the World in Eighty Days, Treasure Island, Alice in Wonderland, Gulliver's Travels, Arabian Nights, Aesop's Fables, Kidnapped, etc., were simultaneously published by several publishers like Macmillan Company of India,

Oxford University Press, Orient Longman, S.Chand & Co., Hemkunt Press, and Subash Publishers (Bombay), etc.

Reading tastes of children are changing. Books of fantasy appear to be declining in numbers, quality, and readership. Books about reality are on the increase.

Sheila Egoft has remarked that the young people

say to the adult world : 'Tell us no lies,
pass us no platitudes, we will test truth by
our own experience... Respect us.' 20

Gradually, the immediacy of the urge to know created a demand for readable books of information on a wide variety of subjects. 'Readable' had a dual significance : Information had to be presented to children of all ages in both authentic and interesting manner; on the other hand, research in reading had established that children in schools varied greatly in their ability to read. As such, no increase in scientifically devised materials could ever make identical reading material suitable for all of them. There were gifted children who had to be taken to greater heights and depths of reading; there were children whose level of maturity exceeded their ability to read and for whom a provision of less difficult but mature and authentic material had to be made.

20. Sheila Egoft, "Children's Books: A Canadian View of American Scene", in Crosscurrents of Criticism edited by Paul Helms. (Boston : Hornbook, 1977), p.132.

Another trend has been the concern for the teaching of beginning reading and for the expansion of individual reading beyond textbook materials. The outcome is 'easy' books, controlled in vocabulary, yet full of impact, and well-produced -- though many a time, in the words of Dora V. Smith,

silly and insulting to the intelligence of children and wooden in story and illustration at their worst.²¹

Bringing out books, as such, based on the revised syllabuses of the NCERT and other agencies has been a remarkable feature of the last decade. Publishers, big and small, of repute and new small ones, authors known and unknown - all of them decided to 'help' the child with heaps of material for him to 'read on his own'. So the child, once again became the 'victim' in their hands, because neither the teacher was in a position to know what to offer to the child, nor the librarian was capable of selecting suitable reading material for him from this unmanageable heap of books, and the parents were at a loss to find the 'best' for their children, the reason being - there was no yardstick, no guideline for them to judge the material that was available in abundance. An

21. Dora V. Smith, Fifty Years of Children's Books : 1910-1960. (Illinois : The National Council for Teachers of English, 1963), pp. 62-63.

absence of a critical review of the children's literature became a serious gap, a vacuum which needed to be filled.

School Use of Children's Literature

The process of learning has gone on since man first existed and his ideas about it have been expressed in proverbial form. 'You can take a horse to the water, but you can't make him drink' is a proverbial way of saying that you must have a motive for learning. 'If at first you don't succeed, try, try, try again' is a recognition that some quality of persistence is needed. 'Practice makes perfect' speaks for itself. 'All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy', in its modern version would be interpreted as meaning that there must be pleasure and delight in learning, and 'you must learn to walk before you can run' recognises that there are stages in learning which must be taken in the right order if success is to be achieved.²²

This motivation has become the main force in the theory of learning. Books are being used to motivate children to read and derive delight and pleasure.

Today it is common practice for a wide variety of books to be provided catering to the needs of all age groups in schools and reflecting not only the curriculum, but also the extra academic interests of children. The schools are promoting use of children's books at various levels to impart knowledge with an accent on pleasure and delight. The day a child starts going to school, he is exposed to a very strange world of books, which at that

22. John Blackie, Inside the Primary School (London: H.N.S.O., 1967), p.25.

time mainly consists of textbooks. This is the only property of a school going child in our country, may be the only printed thing he comes across, the only tool of education in his possession. But it is not enough to satisfy his curiosity, to fulfil his needs, or even to quench his thirst of knowledge. A textbook, no doubt exposes the child to a variety of learning situations, but it cannot give all that a child needs. It may be a starting point of learning in his life, but it leads him from a small, rather prosaic world of textbooks to a more picturesque, more interesting world of children's literature.

While speaking of colourful world of books, Charolette Huck and Doris Young remark :

If a cartographer tried to create a map of this elusive world of books, he could include mountain peaks of adventure, and valleys shadowed by fears and suspense. There would be broad plains of information, rivers sparkling with laughter, and caves of mystery. Exposed rock strata would reveal life in the past. Snug harbours would indicate comfort and security. New interests would sail forth on a explorations of the oceans in the world ... the teacher can reveal the 'world of books' to the child; she can show him the map, and help him begin his life time exploration.²³

So this is the world of books to which the child gets introduced in the form of children's literature. The schools have certain aims and objectives to achieve through them.

23. Charolette Huck and Doris A. Young, op.cit., p.2.

Developing Reading Interests in Children

In America number of research studies and investigations have been done with regard to the elements that attract children to books - even the preferred content, and the most popular books have been identified. These researches have revealed that the factors in literature which appeal to the children have remained relatively constant. Surveys are conducted and a good number of bibliographies are prepared every year e.g. ²⁴ Books for Elementary School Libraries : An Initial Collection, Adventuring with Books (2,400 titles), Bibliography : Books for Children, Children's Books Too Good to Miss, Growing Up with Books, Picture Books for Children and so on.

Children's Book Review Service began in 1971, and makes a special attempt to review books that will appeal to children. The Horn Book is one of the most scholarly and literate publications in this field. Kirkus Reviews is entirely a pre-publication service. Apart from these, there are a number of other publications and yearly lists. Thus they are in a position to take a step ahead in the direction of developing reading interests in children. According to Dunn,

surprise, plot, repetition, animals, narrativeness, liveliness, familiar experiences especially appeal to children of primary level,

24. Mary Meacham, op.cit, p.18.

whereas Witty and others found that

animal stories, books with humour in narration,
stories of real boys and girls and books about
children of other lands

are favourites with children in intermediate grades.

Gunderson noted that the seven year olds "like the realistic
to be personified." According to Novell,

animal stories rank first, with biography in
second place for the children in grades three
to six.²⁵

If the children are exposed to the books that are written
keeping their interests in mind, they can give them a
"lifelong source of enjoyment : the reading habit", says
Barbara Ker Wilson.²⁶

In India also, the schools are trying to achieve
similar aims by introducing children's books as supplementary
readers in the syllabuses for the school going children. The
aim is to develop reading interest in them. Reading has its

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25. Fannie W. Dunn, "Interest Factors in Primary Reading
Material" Education 113,
Paul Witty et. al. "Children's Choices of Favourite
Books", Journal of Educational Psychology 37: 266-78
(May '46),
Agnes G. Gunderson, "What Seven Year Olds Like in Books",
Elementary English 30: 163-66, (March '53), as quoted by
Charolette Huck and Doris A. Young, op.cit., pp.6-7.
26. Barbara Ker Wilson, Writing for Children, (New York:
Franklin Watts Inc., 1960), p.13.

own place in life. The child who cannot read is considered and considers himself different from the rest of the community who can read. The loss of social prestige is often compensated by delinquency, generally bad behaviour and a rejection of book learning. Murrey and Downs have said :

There is no doubt that the inability to read satisfactorily has caused and is causing great unhappiness to many children. Reading is a tool subject. Without it a child finds himself backward in most other school subjects. This backwardness is, not surprisingly, followed by absenteeism, which in turn tends to make his difficulties greater.²⁷

Developing Ability to Read with Comprehension and Speed

This particularly means that whatever children are taught in the class-room with the help of a textbook may be utilized and reinforced through these books. Normally this holds true to the books that are prescribed in the courses of study. However, these books are expected to be written within the structure and vocabulary limits that are spelt out in the syllabuses. The theory is that at the end of first or second year of English learning, children become familiar with certain vocabulary items, and can also understand a few structures. They can now read a book on their own if it is attractive enough to look at, interesting

27. W.Murray and L.W.Downs, Children Learn to Read (London: Harper and Company, 1955), pp.13-14.

in its content and well within their comprehension. The teachers, librarians and parents can select some books to motivate them to read on their own.

Meeting the Needs of the Gifted and the Inquisitive

There are children of all kinds in a class: the slow learners, the mediocres, and the gifted ones. Children's books can be recommended to them as per their needs, provided a critical study is regularly conducted for judging their suitability. As referred to earlier such surveys are being conducted in other advanced countries.

Helping Children Getting Detailed Information

There are topics which cannot be covered in the textbooks due to the limitations of space and syllabus. The primary aim of such a book is to provide knowledge with entertainment, and in this way it is different from a textbook.

The teachers are becoming conscious of the need, advantages and its importance in the curriculum. National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) has organized several All India conferences and seminars in order to discuss this issue with school teachers, university professors, members of Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages (CIEFL) etc. In one of the conferences

held at Bangalore it was accepted that a supplementary reader

serves as a reinforcement of what children have learnt through a textbook; it widens their knowledge by exposing them to diversified extensive reading material, and it increases the awareness of the subject as regards the world around him.²⁸

Prescribed and Non-prescribed Children's Books

Prescribed children's books are known as supplementary readers, rapid readers, or books for extensive reading. They are written in accordance with the syllabus and the Boards examine children through question papers in the examinations. They have controlled vocabulary items, are governed by graded structures, though new vocabulary items or unfamiliar structures can be used sparingly if they are relevant to the text and the vocabulary items are properly contextualised, glossed or illustrated. They have to be a class easier to enable the child read on his own. Particularly meant for reinforcement of the skills in reading, these books are an integral part of enrichment programme. In this case reading takes place in a relaxed atmosphere, whether in the classroom or at home. But the syllabus makes it sure that the children read them as eventually their knowledge is tested

28. Indira Kulshreshtha, (ed.), Supplementary Readers in English, (New Delhi : National Council of Educational Research & Training, 1979), pp. 59-60.

in the examination.

The non-prescribed children's books are mainly meant to be a source of pleasure and growth. They have a definite appeal for children. Stories are a child's first and most lasting 'literary love'. Sure plot development in a story and an effective handling of the subject matter are characteristically apparent in these books. They have, sometimes, effective and appealing sense of humour : e.g. Alice in Wonderland offered both amusement and enjoyment to children, which is the primary aim of a children's book. They have convincing characters who grow with the story. It is through these

well drawn individuals that children gain insight into their own personal problems and their ever widening relationships with other people. 29

The flood of recent publications in children's books is so powerful and overwhelming that there is a danger of children being exposed to the 'undesirable reading material' which may do more harm than good to them. Since children are sensitive individuals, the books have permanent effect on their minds. Those who select books for them, should be very careful in taking a decision in this regard. Unfortunately, the situation

29. May Hill Arbuthnot, op. cit., p.25.

is not very happy in our country. An absence of proper evaluative criteria is the biggest handicap. No single person can possibly read all the books, judge them and recommend the selected ones to the children. Teachers have many more things to do than to spend so much time for reading all the books that are printed every year. The librarian is the only soul left to go through them. But the absence of the evaluative criteria makes his task as difficult as of parents and teachers.

The schools have a different story to tell. They have to select books for their libraries before the end of the financial year. The funds are likely to be surrendered if the books are not purchased, and funds once surrendered, become difficult to be raised. In such circumstances the schools tend to choose any book that 'looks' good to them, or which is recommended by one of the teachers, or even the ones on which the publishers offer the maximum discount. As a result, sometimes even unfair practices are used, and certainly they are not healthy either for the institutions or for the teachers and children.

Children are not born with inherently good taste in their choice of books. Faced with a shelf filled with mediocre titles and one good book, the typical reader

whether a bright, poor or average student, will read the mediocre books first, and he may never find the 'one' good book. Children do not, of their own accord, and with no adult guidance, tend to choose good books in preference to mediocre or poor ones. They will remember the good ones longer and with greater pleasure, but they will not voluntarily choose them without considerable guidance from some adult in whose judgment they have confidence.

Eakin remarks :

....given the opportunity, children will read as widely and as happily from shelves of nothing but good books as they will from shelves of poor to mediocre books.³⁰

If the child is the 'father of man', then one would surely want any childhood to be as rich as possible in positive, formative experience. Smith says :

The thing that makes a book a good book to a child is that it is an experience. The child who has read and enjoyed such a book, has grown a little; has added something to his stature as an individual. He is a little more capable of enjoying new impressions and receiving new ideas which will illuminate his next new experience, whatever it may be. He has gained something permanent which can never be taken away from him.³¹

30. M.Eakin, Good Books for Children, (Illinois : University of Chicago Press, 1962), p. x.

31. Lillian H.Smith, The Unreluctant Years, (Chicago : American Library Association, 1953), p. 6.

She further remarks that a child's range of choice in reading will largely depend upon what is available to him. This depends on adults. Mistaken ideas among adults what book a child likes, or should like, must prevent the very object they intend; a love for reading and a love for books.³² But the proof of the pudding is in the eating. We must let the child select what he wants to read - of course from the heap which is found suitable for him after a careful scrutiny. The Indian child also needs to be exposed to such situations. Cutforth quotes Dr. Johnson, and supports his statement :

I would let him (the child) at first read any English book which happens to engage his attention, because you have done a good deal when you have brought him to have entertainment from a book. He will get better books afterwards.³³

But the question is : should we expose the child to 'all' books - good, mediocre, and even trash ?

32. Ibid., p.13

33. J.A. Cutforth, English in the Primary School, (Oxford : Basil Blackwell, 1956), p.13.

CHAPTER II

T H E M E S

"Is the story about me?" asked the water rat.

"If so, I will listen to it, for I am extremely fond of fiction."¹

And so is every child. It is the theme of a story that holds the interest of children, who like adults, keep changing the purpose of their reading in accordance with their needs. But, one has to pause and think: Where do we get the themes for children's books from? What are their needs? Is it possible to name one book which will be enjoyed and cherished by all children alike?

We must recognize in the very beginning that a child is constantly developing in reading interests as in physical growth. Children differ in their characteristics, their physique, and their mental maturity. In fact, it is difficult to predict what exactly they would like to read.

1. Oscar Wilde, as quoted by Pat D. Arcy in Readings for Meaning in the Report of the survey carried out for the School's Council, Vol.II(London: Hutchinson, 1973), p.1.

Lillian Smith looks at this aspect in the following way :

No formula will solve the uncertainty, the perplexity of adults as to what children are looking for in the books they read. It cannot be confidently asserted that children like this kind of book or they do not like that kind. Yet, there is light to be had if we know where and how to look for it... There is magic in the writing of Alice in Wonderland, Treasure Island, or Tom Sawyer — a magic that enchants children who read them as the tune of the Pied Piper lured the children of Hamelin....²

Children are restless creatures, full of energy. No force on earth can compel them to read what they do not want. They assert their freedom of choice with great skill and persistence. They cannot explain why they reject one book or cling to another, because their judgment is hardly analytical. Perhaps it is based on something genuine — pleasure. Jean Karl, editor of children's books, Atheneum, has stated the child's case with great understanding :

No book is for every child and no book should be made to appeal to every child. A book is made to be loved and cherished by the child it is right for and rejected by those who prefer others.³

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2. Lillian Smith, The Unreluctant Years (Chicago: American Library Association, 1953), p.12.
 3. Jean Karl as quoted by Paul Heins (ed.), Crosscurrents of Criticism (Boston : Hornbook, 1977), p.78.

Much of what a child reads, depends on his mental plane and maturity profile and, of course, in case of books in English, we cannot avoid considering his linguistic ability. He already has the constant problem of understanding and assimilating the varied and enormously puzzling truths of the world which surrounds him.

According to Robinson :

...he is a stranger in a strange land, and his experience has something of the experience of a lonely traveller who overhears a phrase in his own language, or sees in some foreign marketplace a bit of costume of his own land or a Standard Oil sign. Events which seem slight and ordinary to his elders have interest for him.⁴

Choosing a subject for children's books is not a difficult task. The variety in the subject area seems to be inexhaustible and this variety is one of the characteristics of children's literature. Children are eager and inquisitive. They are put into this chaotic, mad world and they have to find their own way. Surely, the adults would like to give them guidance, but scarcely would they like to have it, for they do not want it. They like to find out things for themselves. Then, perhaps, we can give them information - yes, this is what they need, and this is what they want.

4. Mable Louis Robinson, Writing for the Young People (New York : Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1950), p.159.

All books written and meant for children are not necessarily piece of literature, nor does the adult conception of children's books coincide always with that of the child. There are people who think that a simpler treatment of an adult's theme will make a children's book..but they are mistaken. Children cannot be considered as miniature adults. This point of view emerges from a misunderstanding of childhood itself. For children are a race, whose experience of life is totally different from that of adults. Their's is a different world — a child's world in which values are expressed in children's terms and not in those which belong to adult experience. Nina Bawden says :

A good book for children, like a good book for adults, should hold an honest mirror upto life; reflect the emotional landscape they move in, tell them what they want to know. And what they want to know, what they want to understand, is their own situation.⁵

In fact, the materials for writing are not difficult to come by. They are just around us, right under our noses. Wherever there are people living together, chatting or working, creating or dreaming, embracing success or facing failures; wherever there are tall trees, tiny bushes, big lakes or small ponds, deserts or green meadows, and

5. Nina Bawden, "A Dead Pig and My Father" in Writers, Critics and Children, edited by Geoff Fox, et.al. (New York: Agathon Press, 1976), p.10.

wherever one can 'feel' the world around him, there is material to pick up, there is stuff to write about. The writer makes his own channel through which he can go a long way taking the children along with him.

The best example will be how Beatrix Potter wrote about her famous Peter Rabbit. One day, when she was 27, she received the news that Noel Moore, the little son of a former governess, was ill. For the next three months her letters to the sick boy were full of the doings of a rabbit, Peter, and in the margins of her letters she drew and painted tiny and exquisite pictures. Her first letter started :

My dear Noel,

I don't know what to write to you, so I shall tell you a story about four little rabbits whose names were Flopsy, Mopsy, Cottontail, and Peter. They lived with their mother in a sandbank under the root of a big tree. 'Now my dears', said old Mrs. Rabbit one morning, 'You may go into the fields or down the lane, but don't go into Mrs. McGregor's garden....'

and the words, read and chanted over and over again in the nurseries of three generations, still fall on the grownup ear like an incantation of the innocent past.⁶

Paul Hazard sums up :

Books that remain faithful to the very essence of art; those that offer to children an intuitive and direct way of knowledge, a simple beauty

6. Margaret Lane, The Tale of Beatrix Potter, (London: Warne & Co., 1946), p.25.

capable of being perceived immediately, arousing in their souls a vibration which will endure all their lives.... The books that give them respect for universal life, that respect the valour and eminent dignity of play; which understand that the training of intelligence and reason cannot, and must not always have the immediately useful and practical as its goal, are good books for children.

He adds that such books,

"instead of pouring out material on a child's soul that it is crushed, (they) plant in it a seed that will develop from inside."⁷

As stated earlier, the scope of this study is to cover the children in the age group 10 to 14. It is an age group where they widely differ in their maturity traits, activities and interests. In order to develop understanding of expectations in terms of child development, one needs to be familiar with such studies as those of Gessel, Dill, Schonell, Millard, and Russell.⁸ The child is the product of environment

7. Paul Hazard, Books, Children and Men, (Boston : Horn Books, 1944), pp. 42-43.
8. Arnold Gessel, et. al., Youth: The Years from Ten to Sixteen (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1956)
 John R. Dill, Child Psychology in Contemporary Society, (Boston : Holbrook Press, Inc., 1978)
 Fred J. Schonell, The Psychology and the Teaching of Reading (Edinburgh : Oliver and Boyd, 1974)
 C.V. Millard, Child Growth and Development (Boston : D.C. Heath and Co., 1958)
 David H. Russell, Children's Thinking (Boston : Ginn and Co., 1956).

His environmental experience of cultural background may contribute to his uniqueness, there still remain common diversions that are shared by children.

They are developing beings; they are the products of both genetic and environmental influence and they are members of a particular society and culture.⁹

Let us examine the maturity traits, activities and interests of this age group, because this is the guideline for selection of thematic content in children's books.

Whereas at the age of ten a child is nice, happy, casual, unselfconscious, straight forward, sincere, relaxed, companionable, poised, friendly, frank and open-hearted, at the age of eleven he starts setting himself on an equal footing with the adult. Emotionally he may act like an "untamed lion; he brings a complexity of emotions into his forays."¹⁰ But when the twelve-year-old loves, he loves wholeheartedly, and his hatred can be quite as strong. He shows a "miraculous smoothing out compared to his earlier life."¹¹

9. John R. Dill, Child Psychology in Contemporary Society, (Boston : Holbrook Press, Inc., 1978), p.31.

10. Arnold Gessell, op.cit., p.84.

11. Ibid, pp. 120-121.

The children of thirteen and fourteen can be termed as 'older children' or 'teen-age' children. They are anxious to

...take their share of responsibility, and their dearest wish is to be treated with respect accorded to an adult. They rebel against restrictions, although they want and need daily association and friendship with an older person.¹²

The activities and interests of children also vary according to their age. Play is paramount in the lives of many ten year olds and they are happily busy in whatever they do. Animals in general and pets in particular attract them, though they at times, feel on the verge of more mature interests. They are good at collecting lots of odd things ranging from stamps, picture postcards, pebbles, marbles, coins, shells, dolls, and story books.

Reading at this stage shows a wide variation of interestas long as the word 'secret', 'mystery', or 'horse', or 'dog', is in the title, he will be attracted, his interest will grow. He may show only one area of intense interest.

Besides horse and dog stories he may like even sad ones that are going to come out good in the end. They like biographies of famous people as well as adventures and mysteries. Some restrict themselves to stories about children of their own age and time. Others like to experience children of their own age growing up to become famous people....¹³

12. Jean Poindexter Colby, The Children's Bookfield (New York : Pellegum and Cudhay, 1952), p.33.

13. Arnold Gessel, op.cit., p.59.

But as soon as they enter their eleventh year, play becomes secondary, that is, it can be included in their relationships with people, but people are now more important to them than play. Of course, their interests are quite "similar to ten's", with a developing liking for comic books. Gessel says :

...mysteries are still favourites though they don't make as much difference as they used to.... Though they like books more, they don't like comics any less.... If eleven is not allowed to read comics at home, he can always find ways to get them immolested -- at the neighbour's house or somewhere else. Banning comics or increasing vigilance is not the answer to control.¹⁴

When they enter their twelfth year, their mentality changes. They want to be a part of the group, and are heavily ruled by the group. But a twelve-year-old can also enjoy himself alone. Both boys and girls have a wide range of interests. They are now entering the adult sphere of interest and may use the library regularly. Mysteries lead as the favourites for both, and adventures are a close and second choice...comic book reading still persists...they enjoy human interest stories but on the whole their reading tastes "differ quite sharply."¹⁵

So far as the thirteen-year-old is concerned, he often wishes he had more time to read because he is often

14. Ibid., p.95.

15. Ibid., p.132.

too busy with other things. Gessel has observed :

Newspaper reading is becoming more prevalent.... but the majority concentrates on the front page, funnies and sports. More time is spent on magazines ...science magazines...sports magazines...pictorial magazines.... A few girls are enjoying movie magazines ... Musicals and adventures are preferred.¹⁶

The life of a fourteen-year-old is all of a piece--an exciting, full, active, and happy existence.

The amount of reading (he) accomplishes, is largely determined by his own individuality. Some do not have time for more than their school assignments. Others read a good deal and their interests are varied.... They track down a number of books by the same author, or they will read or avoid reading a certain subject...human interest stories, certain columns, and society page are coming into (his) orbit of interest.¹⁷

A close contact with children who are still growing up, would reveal that the growth of interest in their reading depends on various factors. Schonell and Goodacre classify these factors in five different categories :¹⁸

home background which exerts a powerful influence;
the level of child's intelligence which is closely related to the development in reading;
his reading ability has a great influence on his desire to read;

16. Ibid, p.164

17. Ibid., p.203

18. Fred J. Schonell and Elizabeth Goodacre, The Psychology and Teaching of Reading (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1974), pp. 158-159.

the kind of activities and other interests which attract him at the primary school level plays an important role in the development in reading; and.

the kind of guidance and help he obtains at certain crucial points of his growth.

A child is not an adult, undersized physically and mentally. He is a complete human being who, on his way from childhood to maturity, has certain special needs entirely different from those of the adults. These needs reach over into his reading as elsewhere, and only the person who understands them can make adequate response. To meet them on their grounds, we must approach them as equals, not as adults, writing 'down' to them. We must know the kind of dialogue they have, their demands upon action and climax, their grasp of the situation, their sort of humour, pathos and sentiments. 562946

They are not miniature adults. The very concept that they are individuals with their own needs, interests, likes, dislikes, and activities, suggests a need for a section of literature which can capture the wonders of the world, which can depict the attainments and disappointments of childhood.

The guidelines can be taken from the learning theories as also the guides based on children's interests, because interests become a part of their personality through the process of identification. Such studies are also available

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for authors, e.g., Dunn has found that surprise, plot repetition, animals, narrative quality, liveliness and familiar experiences were of special appeal to the children of primary school stage.¹⁹

Similarly, Paul Witty and others discovered that "animal stories, books with humour in narration, stories of real boys and girls and books about children in other lands, were favourites of children of the intermediate grades."²⁰

May Lazer has listed adventure, action, mystery, realism and child life, humour, animal life and sports as elements that appeal to the middle grade children.²¹

If someone tries to consider the characteristics of children of 11 to 13, he would know that they have certain implications leading to a selective reading material. Huck

19. Fannie W. Dunn, 'Interest Factors in Primary Reading Material' Contribution to Education, No.113 (New York: Bureau of Publication, Teacher's College, Columbia University, 1921), as quoted by Charolette Huck and Doris A. Young in Children's Literature in Elementary School, (New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston, 1961), p.6.

20. Ibid, p.6

21. May Lazer, "Reading Interests, Activities and Opportunities of Bright, Average and Dull Children, Contribution to Education, No.707 (New York: Bureau of Publication Teachers College, Columbia University, 1937). Ibid, p.7.

and Young explain it in this way²² :

The rate of their physical implications varies widely. Their rapid growth precedes beginning, i.e., puberty. Girls are about two years ahead of boys in development. This results in a continued differentiation in reading preferences. The books like Call It Courage by Sherry, or Maggie Rose, Her Birthday Christmas by Sawyer, Follow My Leader by Garfield, Miracle on Maple Hill by Sorenson, (The Hidden Pool by Ruskin Bond or Stories of Valour by Rajendra Awasthy,) can satisfy these children.

Understanding and accepting the sex role is a development task of this period. At this stage, books may provide impetus and inspiration to children for discussion and identification with others meeting this task. This is the time when books like Caddie Woodlawn by Brink, The Lone Hunter by Steele or Two Log Crossing by Edmonds would be needed for them. The sustained and intense interest in specific activities makes these children read with complete absorption.

They spend more time in reading at this stage than any other. They tend to select books related to one topic, e.g., horses, mysteries or adventure and books like River of the Wolves by Meader attract them. Increased understanding of reality makes possible a projection into the world of fantasy. This means that there is a need to introduce

22. Ibid, pp.11-12.

children to imaginative literature through books like Twentysone Balloons by Du Bois and The Tunnel in the Sky by Heinsteins. Increased emphasis upon peer group and sense of belongingness, deliberate exclusion of others, and the expressions of prejudice leads to a unique contribution of all, e.g., in a classroom atmosphere a 'bibliotherephy' can aid individual and group adjustments. This can be possible through books like The Hundred Dresses by Eleanor Estes, Ginnie and the New Girl by Wooley, and Mary Jane by Sterling.

Awareness of self and interest in feelings of self and others, search for values, and interests in problems of the world means helping children relate reading to current events, provide opportunities for discussions of books and their significance. The children at this stage need to be introduced to books like Trouble After School by Bein, Carol from the County by Fredman, The Big Wave by De Jong, etc. Thus the themes of children's books are directly related to the culture of the society.

The Cultural Heritage

The genre of children's literature was born in the eighteenth century. It reflected both educational philosophies of John Locke and Jean Jacques Rousseau, as well as its culture. Before their impact on education

children read books of adults, e.g., Pilgrims Progress, Robinson Crusoe, Gulliver's Travels, etc. — even the novels of Richardson and Fieldings could be seen in their custody.

Since children's books are unquestionably a part of education, they are bound to have a deep-rooted source in the culture of society. However little they may deal directly with social issues, they inevitably convey a good deal about prevailing social attitudes and problems.

Again and again the stories told children that industry and attention can accomplish very hard things.... There is nothing in which they will not enable you to excell.²³

In the West the popular books were Horn Books, primers, ballads, chapbooks, and apart from these some children read Aesop's Fables. In India, children were offered stories from Hitopadesha, Panchatantra, and Jatakas. But they preferred to read stories written for adults, e.g., stories from Mangarovar by Premchand, especially stories like Idgah and Mantra. They enjoyed reading Chandrakanta, Chandrakanta Santati, Boothnath, Godan and Gaban too. In brief one can say that they adopted the books which were written for adults like they adopted Alice in Wonderland

23. Lydia Maria Child, "Evenings in New England", (p.41) as quoted by Anne Scott MacLeod, A Moral Tale (Connecticut : Archon Books, 1975), p.95.

or, for that matter, Treasure Island. The reason was simple. These books had mysteries which could leave them spellbound, fantasies that could make their imaginations soar to endless heights, adventures in which they could participate and enjoy, suspense which could make them read the book with unabated interest.

It was Rousseau who had first floated the idea of a Toy Library, and after his Some Thoughts Concerning Education was published, books for children as such began to emerge. The Eighteenth Century stories for children made a clear cut distinction between the education of sexes, and the education of rich and poor. Women writers wanted girls to have more education than was prescribed by Rousseau, who wanted girls to be educated to become a 'good' wife and 'good' mothers. There was another debatable angle to the problem, i.e., who should teach the child ? Rousseau believed that the father was the best teacher for his son and the mother for her daughter. The place where education was to be imparted was another point of concern. Rousseau advocated isolating the child from the society altogether and also from other children as well as from vices.

Speaking about culture, Werner Stark has said :

We know, and we can effectively communicate with other minds because behind us all there is

the common life which holds us together as a unity in diversity — a true unity in a true diversity.²⁴

Rousseau's philosophy has a close resemblance with Indian culture, where the sons, till recently, were supposed to be the earning members of the family, hence the assets, and the daughters were trained to be good and faithful wives and good as well as sacrificing mothers. From time immemorial Indian girls have been playing this role. The boys were cut off from the rest of the society and were sent to the Gurukuls to live with the teacher, to serve the gurus and get educated in all walks of life. Take, for example, the life of Ram - who was sent with Guru Viswamitra to help him and other saints perform the Yajnas. It was here that he learnt all that was required. Of course, he was accompanied by Lakshman, his brother. In Mahabharata also we come across similar instances where the Kauravas and the Pandavas were sent to Guru Dronacharya to learn archery. The stories of Aruni, of Eklavya, of Nachiketa, of Ram and Krishna - all of them tell the same tale - the tale of obedience, regard to elders, determination to fight 'evil' and to achieve 'truth'. The story of Shivaji tells us how great his mother Jeeja Bai was, whereas the story of Savitri tells us what a devoted wife she was, who

24. Werner Stark, The Fundamental forms of Social Thoughts (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962), p.228.

could bring back her husband Satyavan from the clutches of Yama - the Death ! There are innumerable instances that have been written for the children over and over again.

These instances bear out the facts that :

- i) religious belief of the middle class has affected the literary achievements.
- ii) every thing written should be written for moral education and this idea dominated children's literature in particular,
- iii) with the progress of the period, some imaginative and entertaining qualities seeped into the books,
- iv) a majority of writers felt the need for useful information imparted to children as against the mere use of fairy tales,
- v) still both groups wished to have subjects such as respect and love for nature, knowledge about plants and animals, values of universal nature, etc. The theme of kindness towards animals occurred in these stories quite often,
- vi) some writers punish their characters severely, e.g., Mary Wollstonecraft and Dorothy and Mary Jane Kilner in the West and also many writers of Indian books,
- vii) but not all writers like to do so. Sometimes they use a combination of teaching techniques in their stories, the most befitting example of which is Hitopadesh - an all-time Sanskrit classic of children's literature.

Sylvia Patterson, while talking about the eighteenth century children's literature in England concludes :

Children's literature of the period reflects the country's concern with education - who deserved an education; what subjects should be taught; who

should do the teaching; and where the students should be taught.... The popular influence is reflected not only in education, however, but in facing the stark realities of eighteenth century life, such as class system, real possibility of a change in fortune; ...the clear distinction between the roles in society of the sexes; the virtues which the society held in esteem and the harsh punishments for crimes, or in cases of children's literature, for lessons not learnt well.²⁵

So far as children's literature in Hindi in India is concerned, there has been an awareness since Independence and some of the leading publishers have come forward and brought out translations of Indian classics in simplified language, e.g., Hindi Pracharak Pustakalaya has tried to bring out children's editions of the famous Bengali writer Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's novels in Hindi under the series Bal Bankim Mala. Atma Ram & Sons has also brought out a series entitled Bal Uphaar Mala which has fairy tales, science fiction, adventure stories, and stories of bravery and courage. Raj Pal & Sons has brought out informative books under the series Gyan Vigyan Pustakamala, which has titles like Story of Telephones, Story of Atom, or Story of Stars, etc.

Indian culture has a great deal to lend to the literature and if an attempt is made to pass it on to the

25. Sylvia W. Patterson, "Eighteenth Century Children's Literature in England : A Mirror of Its Culture", Journal of Popular Culture, XII:1(Summer 1979), p.42.

children, it can bring home to them old customs, beliefs, art, social institutions, etc., which are the characteristics of our society — the society which is so different from Western society both in its philosophy and culture. It would not be correct to say that such an attempt has not been made by the authors and publishers in the area of English so far. Small publishers, big publishers, new authors, renowned authors, experienced artists, new artists — all of them have tried to write and produce good books for children from time to time. A searching glance through the pile of books in a book shop, a casual look at the catalogues of various publishers has revealed that one and all, they have tried to give the 'best' to the child, but again the question arises : Whether all that is published is really good for children ! ... 6

Literary Heritage

As regards the Indian scene, it has already been mentioned that the earlier literature was full of didacticism and morals. The didactic period in books was decidedly on the wane. The books had no plot as such, incident followed incident, and the story ended when the writer was ready to stop.

Aesop's Fables like The Fox and the Crow, The Lion and the Mouse, The Hare and the Tortoise, The Fox and the Grapes,

Belling the Cat, The Dog and the Shadow, The Wind and the Sun, The Milkmaid and the Her Pail, The Crow and the Pitcher, are a few of the ones that have been very popular all over the world. To match these, India had Panchatantra, Hitopadesh, and Jatakas. France came out with fables like The Fox and the Goat, The Cricket and the Ant, The Grasshopper and the Ant, The Dove and the Ant, and so on. These fables deal with the universal moral values and therefore became quite popular - though more with adults than children. We had, and still have more than enough to offer our children in India.

But again we have to face the problem of how can the children, who know but little English, and hardly have an opportunity to listen to or speak it at home, understand them and enjoy them? The books have to be made understandable for them. This needs special qualifications and efforts on the part of the author and editor. The fact is that the first qualification for editing or writing books for children, according to Louey Chisholm, "is love and knowledge of little readers." 26

Paul Hazard once said :

...if for centuries the grown-ups did not even think of giving children appropriate clothes, how would it ever have occurred to them to provide children with suitable books? 27

26. Louey Chisholm, The Golden Staircase (New York: G.P. Putnam and Sons, 1907), p. vi.

27. Paul Hazard in "Books, Children and Men" as quoted by May Hill Arbutnot, Children and Books (Chicago: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1957), p.43.

But people did think of providing reading material to children; they did want their children to know a lot about the world; they did want children to 'enjoy' themselves, have fun, and gain knowledge.

Mother Goose's Melody or Sonnets for Cradle appeared some time in 1760-1765, and were followed by Goody Two Shoes, which was full of sociological lessons, with its characters as types rather than individuals, and its humour more often adult than child-like. It was in 1719 that Daniel Defoe (1659-1731), gave his most famous book The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe - a book which satisfies the child's appetite for achievement. He identifies himself with Robinson Crusoe and wins an ordered and controlled place in the world as if by his own solitary efforts and foresight.

Then followed Jonathan Swift's Gulliver's Travels. Swift (1667-1745) offered the first adventure to the children, and so far as the children are concerned, the first adventure makes the book, and it is Lilliput forever ! Didacticism followed again. In 1762 Rousseau proclaimed his theory of a new day for children through his book Emile.

May Hill Arbuthnot says :

He believed in the joyous unfolding of a child's powers through a free, happy life.... The writers in France and England (followers of Rousseau)

carried over the idea of following the child's natural interests and developing these. But in practice, they went at the business hammer and tongs. In these deadly books of theirs, if a poor child picked up strawberries, the experience was turned into an arithmetic lesson.²⁸

She has further classified the literature available for children through the ages into a chronological order as landmarks. The classification relevant to this study is as follows²⁹:

- 1846: Book of Nonsense, Edward Lear
- 1865: Fairy Tales, Hans Christian Andersen (First English translation)
- 1865: Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, Lewis Carroll
- 1865: Hans Brinker or The Silver Skates, Mary Mopes Dodge
- 1868: Little Women, Lousa M. Alcott
- 1872: Sing Song, Christina Rossetti
- 1876: The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, Mark Twain
- 1879: Under the Window, Kate Greenaway
- 1880: The Peterkin Papers, Lucretia Hale
- 1883: Treasure Island, Robert Louis Stevenson
- 1883: Nights with Uncle Remus, Joel Chandler Harris
- 1883: The Merry Adventures of Robinhood, Howard Pyle
- 1884: Heidi, Johanna Spyri (first English translation)
- 1885: A Child's Garden of Verses, Robert Louis Stevenson
- 1885: The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, Mark Twain
- 1888: Otto of the Silver Hand, Howard Pyle

28. Ibid., p.48.

29. Ibid., p.53.

- 1894: The Jungle Book, Rudyard Kipling
 1900: The Little Black Sambo, Helen Bennerman
 1902: The Tale of Peter Rabbit, Beatrix Potter
 1904: The Wind in the Willows, Kenneth Graham

These are the books that marked new trends in children's literature.

Books in early days were just books, Some you liked, some your ten-year-old grandchild liked, some were also read by adults while many writers such as Dickens were also enjoyed by children. John Tunis says :

The joy of exploration, of discovery, by young eager minds — a joy which exists as it always has — is not likely to be increased by a classification that limits readers to ages 7 to 9. Just as important is the fact that writers, too, need to explore. But many of them are tabbed and classified like motor cars and cheese. Those authors who keep turning out more of the same kind of book year after year, end up by becoming hacks. To develop himself, an author must tackle different and harder tasks. Such development is extremely difficult if he is assigned to a category or an age group and expected to produce for that group alone.³⁰

According to him, in recent years, the frenzy for classification has penetrated writing and publishing, which is most undesirable. His view point is that the

writers are tagged, taped, coded, branded.... Books are also pigeon-holed...each book is a piece of merchandise, dropped into a slot, graded according to its market.³¹

30. John P. Tunis, "What is a Juvenile Book ?" in Crosscurrents of Criticism, op.cit., p.25.

31. Ibid., p.23.

To quote a modern writer, "In 1693 John Locke published his Thoughts Concerning Education, and invented the child." Mr. Townsend says that this statement is an exaggeration, but there seems to be a lot of truth in it. The fact is that childhood, until relatively modern times, did not exist for a vast majority of children. It is quite possible that, as a child, one might have read books which were originally written for adults, but were largely accepted by children. These books are now being considered as children's classics, e.g., Oliver Twist, David Copperfield, Robinson Crusoe, Gulliver's Travels, etc., in English and, Panchatantra, or stories of Premchand like Panch-Parmeshwar, Bade-Ghar-ki-Beti, Idgah, or of Tagore like The Cabuliwallah, or of Jai Shankar Prasad such as Madhua or even of Chandra Dhar Sharma Guleri's Usne Kaha Tha. One might remember having read even the novels of Premchand and still cherish the memories of the moments of happiness and grief that he experienced while browsing over them. Though, of course, at the school stage when children read these classics, they might read only upto the point where the main characters leave childhood, e.g., David Copperfield would end for them when David is adopted by Betsy Trotwood.

But surely there has to be a difference in an adult and a juvenile book. Perhaps, the difference lies in two

directions : first is technical - a book for children stays with one view point much more steadily than does its adult counterpart dealing with the same theme. The second difference is in attitude and approach to the subject. A book for a child will have its limitations according to his mental age whereas a book for adults knows no such barrier. It soars freely. Isabelle Holland quotes Townsend again who said, "I believe myself that children 'want' to act rightly and bravely, and 'want' things to matter."³² Then she concludes :

The walls of childhood are down. In fact we are back to square one: In subject matter there is no childhood. But in attitude towards these - in the sense that what does about them 'matters' - lies the strength and the reality of the young adult book.³³

History and Geography in Children's Books

History differs from biography in the sense that biography ends with the life of one man, whereas history is concerned not with the life and work of a particular individual, but with the aspirations and struggles, the failures and achievements of the never-ending humanity. India continues in history as the inheritor of a significant past whose

32. Isabelle Holland, "The Walls of Childhood", in Crosscurrents of Criticism, op.cit., p.34.

33. Ibid., p.34.

spirit still lives in her creative strivings which, right down the ages, has never known a full stop. Napoleon's famous aphorism was that "history is nothing but a fable agreed upon" and H.G.Wells believed that "human history is, in essence, a history of ideas !"

The mighty mountains and rivers have played a great part in shaping India's history. The Himalayas, according to Dr. Gokhale,

...are celebrated in ancient India as the abode of isolation and protection was offered by them to the land that sloped away to the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal. They were also the source of the waters of the Ganga and the Indus, without which life would have been impossible to the millions who, through the centuries teemed into the land, and who in general veneration called these rivers 'mother'.³⁴

India is very rich in historical heritage. The ancient Indian and the early periods extending upto and about eighth century after Christ are significant because they reveal the growth of individual civilization along with its characteristic features. The culture of the period had such dynamism and vitality that modern India still has its roots in it.

34. Dr. B.G.Gokhale, Ancient India: History and Culture (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1956), p.3.

The next period of about nine centuries was a disturbed and unsettled one owing to foreign invasions and conflicts, internal as well as with the invaders. The history of this period will be an account of wars and conquests and not of the lives of people except for intervals of peace and prosperity. One such period was under the early Moghal emperors.

However, India returned to settled conditions towards the end of the eighteenth century, though it was under foreign rule, and the upheaval started in 1857 when the people of India began a revolution against the British rule. Discontent broke into struggle and the struggle meant an awakening. Eventually the achievement of freedom followed and India became an independent country.

Now, all these events can be used and have been used as 'themes' of children's books. Children's books have, to a great extent, reflected the predominant interests of the adult world. Teachers include books about other lands as their preferred reading lists, librarians promote such books, and parents gladly approve of them. This enthusiasm may suggest diadactic writing all over again, but it is for the teachers, librarians, and the parents to distinguish a good story from a 'synthetic, made to specifications fiction' with which children are confronted. A good number of books have been listed in the catalogues and book lists are issued by

various publishers, which can be of some interest to children, as these books are nothing but some incidents and anecdotes from the lives of the 'great' - like Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Nehru, Maulana Abul Kalam 'Azad', Sardar Patel, and many other freedom fighters.

A child at the age of twelve is, by nature, inclined to hero worship, and at this stage biographies written with this aim in mind would be much liked by him. In historical fiction there are two elements : the story and the fabric of history into which the story must be woven, resulting in a fusion of imagination, chronicle, and writing skill. There are books like Kidnapped by R.L.Stevenson or Ivanhoe by Sir Walter Scott, which children love to read. Lillian Smith says :

The ultimate value of a historical story for children can be measured to some extent by the interest aroused in historical characters and events, and by the author's ability to give a unique feeling for a period. It has a root in actuality and so makes us listen.³⁵

Geoffery Trease remarks :

At every moment of the story the reader has to be simultaneously convinced of two separate things: first that these characters are alive and warm and tangible as if they were in the room with him; second that they are not modern people in this room, but are in another time and place whose atmosphere they have thrown around him and themselves, like some magic pavilion. The achievement of that illusion is really the whole

35. Lillian Smith, op.cit., pp.175-176.

craft of the historical story-teller.³⁶

May Hill Arbuthnot has gone to the extent of suggesting some guide lines for the authors of historical fiction which could be very useful.³⁷ She suggests that the fiction be accurate, not only in the major events, but also in the small details of everyday living which makes the past understandable. In her opinion, these stories may recreate the past in a way that people, places, and problems seem almost as real as those we know today. The fiction tells a story regardless of the period - so absorbing that the historical background and details fall into secondary place and do not seem to be an end in themselves. The problems and difficulties of past throw a light upon our problems today, because human nature and aspirations remain much the same.

History is a mighty Tower of Experience which Time has built among the endless fields of bygone ages. It is no easy task to reach the top of this ancient structure to get the benefit of the full view. There is no elevator, but young feet are strong and it can be done. His aim was to take the child out of his self-centred life, to extend his horizon, broaden his view, and open up vistas down the ages past.³⁸

36. Geoffrey Trease, "The Historical Novelist at Work", in Writers, Critics, and Children, op.cit., p.51.

37. May Hill Arbuthnot, op.cit., p.450.

38. Hendrick W. Van Leon, The Story of Mankind (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, revised edition, 1951), pp. x-xi.

Like history, geographical background is also important. Children need to be given an account of the authentic and exciting life in foreign lands as also to be acquainted with children of other lands who may seem as real children next door. The burning example of such a book for children is Heidi by Johanna Spyri, a Swiss, who wrote it in German. It was translated into English in 1884 after its publication in German. It introduces children to other lands through a delightful story.

It is a story in which the most popular theme of Cinderella, an unwanted and neglected child who comes into her own later on is dealt with. But Heidi has a convincing quality. The child is full of the joy of living, who skips and leaps and falls in love with an old grandfather, the goats, the mountains and with the entire surroundings. Those children who have, or who would read Heidi will not enter Switzerland without a feeling of homecoming. It happens because the book is completely authentic and sincere. This is the quality which is required to produce a book like Heidi, which is still loved by children in America and England, and perhaps will be as much loved by our children too, if they can have access to it.

Recently the trend has changed, and there is a growing emphasis upon the social studies as the core curriculum, and as a result there is a beginning of a great influx of books

about the neighbouring countries in all directions - East, West, North and South. They want children to learn not only the flora and fauna of these countries but also about their social, cultural, educational, and other aspects.

While dealing with these themes the writers are tempted to use travelogues or adventures and explorations. It creates a strange world of books for children where the subject matter is spread all over. Henry S. Canby would put it this way :

The resources of a writer's brain are his knowledge of facts, the results of his observations, the richness of his emotions, the vigour of his imagination, the mental training which enabled him to see effect in cause, and cause in effect³⁹

This 'world of books' has been referred to by Huck and Young in these words :

The 'literature world' is constantly expanding, teachers cannot traverse each road, nor can each child travel to all the earners of that world. But the teacher can reveal the 'world of books' to the child, she can show him the map, and help him begin his lifetime of exploration.⁴⁰

39. Henry S. Canby, as quoted by Indira Kulshreshtha. Supplementary Readers : Preparation and Evaluation, (New Delhi: National Council of Educational Research and Training, 1972), p.28.

40. Charlotte Huck and Doris A. Young, op.cit., p.2.

Science in Children's Books

The social upheaval which is popularly known as renaissance, is a landmark which can be considered as the take off stage of the general progress of the world. This is the stage where reason replaced blind faith. Man started looking around him and started reasoning about various phenomena disregarding the common belief. This new approach to seeing things in the light of reason led to various discoveries and inventions and a marked advancement of knowledge, leading to organized sciences. Today science is much advanced and nobody can say where this knowledge may lead us. In this background the child of today has developed a peculiar imagination. He imagines things that might happen a thousand years hence. This scientific outlook and imagination has been exploited by many a modern writer in writing science fiction for children. Kelly, while mentioning about the themes in science fiction, remarks :

Science fiction authors may be called dreamers....
Like other story writers (they) are interested in
basic questions that affect mankind. What is man ?
How should life be lived ? Their stories are their
answers.⁴¹

It was in July 1956 when two wonderful things happened in America. In Harper's Bazaar appeared an article entitled

⁴¹. Leo P. Kelley, ed., "Themes in Science Fiction" (McGraw-Hill) as quoted in The Writer, 85:10:October 1972, p.5.

An Eye for Mystery written by W.H.Auden which was concentrated on the theme that generally man is losing his power to 'behold' while his ability to 'observe' is constantly increasing. He is busy observing the behaviour of everything God has created: He does not exclude his own behaviour and in this process is losing sight of himself as an individual, an identity, a personality. Auden has said in his article :

As never before, it is the duty of parents to train their children to behold the creatures of Nature which can never lose their identities because they can only be what they already are : The flowers 'fresh and laughing as on the days of great battles', the beasts who 'walk the earth, ignorant, while their splendor lasts, of any weakness', and most of all, perhaps, the stars of the night sky, in all their unchanging majesty and stateliness of movement.⁴²

At the same time Rachel Carson, whose masterpiece of scientific writing The Sea Around Us, had almost baffled the readers and shook their minds, wrote an article entitled "Help your child to Wonder" which appeared in Women's Home Companion. He made a very strong plea by saying :

If I had influence with the good fairy who is supposed to preside over the christening of all children, I should ask the gift to each child be a sense of wonder so indestructible that it would

42. W.H.Auden, "An Eye For Mystery", (Harper's Bazaar, July 1956), as quoted by Edna Johnson, et. al., in Anthology of Children's Literature (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1959), p. 729.

last throughout life, an unfailing antidote against the boredom and disenchantments of later years, the sterile preoccupation with things that are artificial, the alienation from the sources of our strength.⁴³

In the rapidly growing and changing world of the twentieth century, the child became an important individual of the family, school and community. His instinct to learn, which comes from his understandings and curiosity to 'know', had to be satisfied, His insatiable desire to learn about the bewildering, yet exciting world in which he found himself, his willingness to accept and absorb knowledge was to be satisfied through informative literature. Good factual books in the fields of science and social studies have answered many of his questions. Some children are more readily lured into reading by science fiction or informational books than by stories of fun and frolic. Ranel Denney says :

Science is what the world is, earth and water
And what its seasons do. And what space fountained it.
It forges hidden underground. It is dawn's slow Salvo.
It is the closest retort. And it is not yet.⁴⁴

In no other area has there been a greater improvement than in science books for children. It is now possible to

43. Ibid., p.730.

44. Ranel Denney, "The Laboratory Midnight" (Yale University Press), as quoted by A.L.M. Richard (ed. chairman), in Books for You (New York: Washington Square Press, Inc., 1964), p.84.

find authentic, well written, and well illustrated books to meet their requirements and to encourage almost any scientific hobby they may develop. A child's desire to know is twofold - on the one hand he wants to know everything about the natural world, and on the other, he wants to know about human existence.

Pure sciences like astronomy, mathematics, geology, biology, or zoology, are based on theory, on scientific principles which transcend facts. These principles have to be explained, discussed, and interpreted. No simplification can distort facts or hide essential truth of the principles involved. The scope has to be decided in accordance with the mental maturity of the children for whom the book has been written. But one thing has to be made clear to them that scientific knowledge is not an end in itself. It is a process which remains incomplete even in a specialized field. This can be stated in a very convincing way as Feutons have done it :

One of the strangest supergiants is a star named Betelgeuse. At sometimes its diameter is only 180 million miles, which is quite small for a supergiant. The Betelgeuse begins to swell. It keeps on swelling until it reaches 260 million miles and then begins to shrink. No one knows why it does this and no one knows whether it will ever stop!⁴⁵

45. C.L. and M.A. Feutons, Worlds in the Sky (New York: John Day, 1950), pp. 78-79.

The child is equally curious to learn, that

Space time, our scientists tell us, is impervious
It neither evades nor refuses. It curves
As a wave will or a flame - whatever's fervent.
Space time has no beginning and no end
It has no door where anything can enter.
How break and enter what will only bend ?⁴⁶

And Robert Heinlein believes that

...science fiction is realistic fiction. A serious science fiction writer must attempt to start with the real world and ask 'What if...?' He must do it alone, and then turn his scenerio into a story that will entertain a reader - thousands of readers - or he has failed, no matter how logically he has extrapolated the present into the future.⁴⁷

Books like Wagtail by Alice and Fleming H. Crew, Children of the Sea by Wilfrid S. Bronson, The Cricket by Jean Henri Fabre, Far Away and Long Ago by W.H. Hudson, Men, Microscopes and Living Things by Katherine D. Shippin, produced abroad and Understanding Science (Series), Animals and Their Babies by N.N. Majumdar, A Noble Animal, Animal Life, Big Cats and Their Cubs, Lambs and Kids by Shesh Namla produced in India are available for our children. But the books produced abroad are expensive, difficult to comprehend by Indian children, and books produced at home are very few in number.

46. A. MacLeish, A Reply to Mr. Wordsworth (Songs of Eve) (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1954), as quoted by A.L.M. Richards in Books For You (New York : Washington Square Press Inc., 1964), p.110.

47. Robert Heinlein, as quoted in The Writer, March 1974, p.7.

Sociological Aspects in Children's Books

Social evolution and social growth, in other words socialization of human beings is an important aspect of learning. There is a theory of play that children in their daily routine try to recapitulate social evolution. They imitate adults and make believe the social living. The sociological behaviour of the child is inherent in him. This is therefore an important theme for children's literature. Some of the writers in the good old days had exploited this theme to great advantage. Pandit Vishnu Sharman, in his well known treatise Panchatantra has used it to develop social awareness, social responsibilities and social behaviour in his pupils.

It is important to remember that children's world of experience is limited, and new experiences have to be built on the old to widen it. They need substantial themes - about something of real significance to them. Their immediate environment, their home, their school and neighbourhood - all these are very important to them. They have to be provided with opportunities to learn more and more about man and his home, his community, his nation and his world. There are certain concepts which need to be developed in order to enable children understand that all behaviour is caused, e.g., the Swedish story, The Spettekake Holiday, helps the child understand why Pelle

Goran was so cross and irritable when his mother was hospitalized, and why he refused to obey.

Pelle Goran wanted his mother so badly. It burned and smarted inside him when he thought about it. He felt so sorry for her. But most of all he felt sorry for himself because he was so lonesome without her.⁴⁸

Books also help children recognize the special problems which some face. Literature has a characteristic to preserve the problems of every day existence - living, growing, adjusting, changing and so on, e.g., Eleanor Estes has given a serious treatment to a grave problem in The Hundred Dresses. Children are not likely to forget Wanda who was rejected by the group nor the culprits who taunted her.

Books like these make the reader conscious of the growth process by providing experience in testing reactions to emotions in these moments of feelings and in accepting them: e.g., loneliness and sadness are poignantly expressed in Baldwin's story, The Hermit of Crab Island, when a lonely boy loses his only companion - the dog. The interaction of the reader with a book is unique for each individual. It brings different experiences to the words and pictures he perceives.

48. Edith Unnerstad, The Spettekake Holiday (New York : Macmillan, 1958), p.4.

In addition to these, books like Fun Around the World by Scarry, make children laugh because Scarry shows children having fun in different countries. Ring Around a Rosy is pictured as Greek children and Eskimo children play this game wearing funny masks. Children unconsciously identify themselves with them as they laugh and enjoy with them :

And when they laugh, they sound like you
and all children, near and far.

A laugh sounds the same
anywhere in the world :

It is the magic and happy sound
that goes with having fun.⁴⁹

Prompted by Maurice Sendak's Where the Wild Things Are, C.M.Martin, according to Virginia Haviland, urges beginning writers for children

to take courage and treat the fundamentals of love and death with honesty and sincerity. Arouse the passions, release the tensions, but for the small children, at least make sure that supper is still hot at the end.⁵⁰

Realism has found its own place in children's literature. While some stories deal only in childish themes like school rivalries, minor acts of disobedience

49. Patsy Scarry, Fun Around the World (Morristown, N.J.: Silver Burdett Company, 1957), p. 88.

50. Virginia Haviland, Children's Guide to Reference Sources (Washington : Library of Congress, 1972), p. 122.

with consequences leading to realization of mistakes and remorse, books have also dealt with the frivolities and impermanence of life, fortune and happiness. They have taught that it happens many a time that what is pleasant to the eye is full of danger, that 'all that glitters is not gold', and that young children should take care that they do not fall into the trap of such deception. Tagore's The Home Coming is a beautiful story which tells about an adolescent boy, his behaviour, and ultimately his realization of affection for his home.

Like poverty, death was a common feature in children's fiction before 1860; children were taught to consider life itself as the least certain of blessings

...the death of a parent, or sometimes of both, formed the dramatic base of many tales which then went on to relate how the child coped with their situation, bereft of the guidance and protection of a parent's care⁵¹

and further

...the home training idealized in the fiction, never offered to teach children how to manipulate the outer environment to ensure their happiness or success. Quite the contrary, it suggested that they could hope for little control over circumstances and they must therefore learn to be independent of events as far as possible.⁵²

51. Anne Scott MacLeod, op.cit., p.68.

52. Ibid., p.68.

Religion and Mythology in Children's Literature

The socialization process of the human being gradually evolved dogmas and faiths which, in due course of time, took the shape of religion. Man in his early stage of civilization observed phenomena around him and started creating a mythology to explain the myths in the way he experienced it. Thus, religions were established with richly developed mythologies. People in India developed a philosophy of religion and religious mythology which can be expressed as a social way of behaviour based on 'Samskaras'. This was a continuous process starting from the conjugal relationship, conception of child birth and followed throughout in life. In this way this society always thought about creating literature based on religion and mythology, so that the human being could be influenced by way of 'samskaras' and developed into a socially useful personality. Therefore, this theme predominates children's literature in India throughout the ages and modern writers and publishers in India are trying to continue the trend.

Mythological stories, according to May Hill Arbuthnot, "strikes the modern reader as a kind of grown-up fairy tale - strangely beautiful and unearthly."⁵³ The stories

53. May Hill Arbuthnot, The Arbuthnot Anthology of Children's Literature (Chicago : Scott Foresman and Company, 1961), pp. 234-35.

range from little 'why' stories to the most involved, and sometimes unpleasant stories of God's ways with man or with each other. No one probably knows how the myth ever began. Man has always had the capacity to wonder about himself and also about his environment. May be, the first stage of myth-making was submission of man to some unseen force and worshipping this unknown power which made the crops grow, the rivers flow, and man to live the span of his life and die when his time was up.

Then came the stage of giving a shape of either a man or of an animal to this force which was impersonal so far. This personification resulted in justification of the anger of a particular god in terms of thunderbolts or causing fierce storms at sea. Gradually, with extended powers to include abstract virtues, these gods became more and more superhuman and resulted in symbolic figures. Lillian Smith says :

Like the fairy tales, whose origins are lost in the origin of races, the myths have their sources in the childhood of race itself..... The word mythology comes from Greek and means 'stories'. And since the earliest Greek stories were about gods and men, we have come to associate myths with these stories in which primitive people in their effort to understand the mystery of life and of natural phenomena, explained the world in which they found themselves.⁵⁴

54. Lillian Smith, op.cit., p.65.

As mentioned earlier, Indian publishers have exploited this theme to the maximum advantage. They make the children familiar with gods and men. The market is flooded with books like Story of Ramayana (Bani Roy Choudhary, Hemkunt Press, 1977), Tales from Ramayana (Margery Green, Macmillan, 1955), Prince Rama (A.J.Patel, Enka Prakashan Kendra, Ahmedabad), Tales from Indian Classics (three volumes by Savitri, Children's Book Trust, 1973), Nala Damayanti (Shanta, Children's Book Trust), Legends of India (Muriel Wasi, National Council of Educational Research and Training, 1968), and an entire series of over 200 picture books entitled Amar Chitra Katha.

Sports and Games

Another sphere towards which a child is naturally attracted is play. "Play is an activity engaged in for the enjoyment it gives."⁵⁵ Every healthy happy young child plays for the major part of the day. For that reason early childhood can justifiably be called the 'play time' of life.

Play provides the child with opportunities to develop physically, emotionally, socially, and morally, and thus it's a single activity which helps to develop a moral, well adjusted personality.⁵⁶

55. Hurlock, Child Growth and Development, 4th edition (Bombay : Tata McGraw Hill, 1970), p.241.

56. Ibid., p.242.

As mentioned above, the child is attracted towards play activity as if it were his instinctive behaviour. A number of scholars have propounded theories to express that a child likes to play to use the energy which he cannot consume in his normal activities, and that in this way play becomes an outlet for surplus energy. There is another view that the child while playing prepares for his future life - in the play activity he forms attitudes and aptitudes which formulate his future career and life. Yet another scholar feels that in play a child recapitulates various stages of civilization. Whatever the reason a child wants to play because it provides him with opportunities of healthy competition, recreative fun and frolic. It is because of these reasons that play and games have been used as an important base to start educational process of a child. Montessori and Kindergarten systems of elementary education are based on this tendency of the child. Writers of children's literature from time immemorial have tried to use this scheme in a variety of manners and the theme is being exploited by modern writers as well. John Blackie has said

...the process of learning develops gradually and play continues to be of the greatest importance as a means of understanding and learning.... Indeed, the element of play is valuable in all work throughout life.... When that element is absent, work becomes

dull, repetitive, uninspiring, and only worth doing because you make money by it. That is what D.H. Lawrence meant when he wrote 'there is no point in work unless it absorbs you like an absorbing game; if it doesn't absorb you, if it's never any fun, don't do it'. (Pansies, 2nd ed., p.41)⁵⁷

Peter Slade holds that there are two types of plays: Personal and projected; and

...out of personal play we may expect to develop later: running, ball games, athletics, dance, riding, cycling, swimming, fighting, hiking, etc. These are forms of acting. Out of projected play we may expect to develop later: art, playing instruments, love of fresh water, fishing, non-violent games (from snakes and ladders to chess), reading, writing, patience, concentration.... The two main forms of play add qualities to each other, and also to the person who plays. The projected play is mainly responsible for growing quality of absorption and...the personal play develops the quality of sincerity.⁵⁸

There are quite a few sports magazines which cover almost all the sports news in India and abroad - but there are only a few books available on the theory of games like cricket, badminton, table tennis, etc., for children. It is true that in cities like Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras, or even Kanpur, Lucknow, Jaipur, etc., children come to learn all 'know-how' of these games through

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57. John Blackie, Inside the Primary School (London: H.M.S.O., July, 1967), p. 33.
58. Peter Slade, Child Drama (London: University of London Press, 1973), pp. 35-36.

programmes like 'Sports Quiz', 'Sports Magazine', etc., on television; but television is a luxury and neither every city in India has the facility to telecast these programmes, nor every family in India can afford to provide a set for children. Once in a while, one comes across books like Cricket (Vijay Merchant, National Book Trust, India, 1975), or Hockey in India (Sardindu Sanyal, National Book Trust, India, 1972), but one has to accept that there is a lot of scope in this area, and more books need to be written to enlighten children regarding the theoretical aspects of these games. There are some books on educational plays but children need to know all about a game before they plunge into it.

Wild Life in Children's Books

Children are fond of flora and fauna, both wild as well as domesticated. Modern child is curious to know about the behaviour pattern of animals which are not domesticated. He is thrilled by a visit to the zoo where he can see caged animals, or a park where he can see birds in their natural habitat. Therefore, though some writers have used this theme to develop reading material for children, there is still ample scope to write about the parks, forests, and sanctuaries like Bharatpur Bird Sanctuary, Kaziranga Sanctuary, Corbett Park, Sasangir

Forest or Kanha Forest etc. These books can be supported by photographs to attract children read these books.

Curiously enough there are but few books available in India which tell children about the birds and animals of our country, though some efforts have been made during last decade to fill this gap. There are books like Lip the Leopard (Lila Majumdar, Children's Book Trust, 1971), Who is Who at the Zoo (Ruskin Bond, National Book Trust, 1973), The Circus (Mali, Orient Longman , 1973), Some Indian Birds (N.N.Majumdar, Children's Book Trust, 1973), Animal Life (Shesh Namle, Ratna Bharti, 1971) etc. but children need more, perhaps much more than this casual supply of information.

The above account gives a fair picture of the areas and themes on which children's books have been written and are being written. So far as children's books in English are concerned, most of the available literature at present is written and published either in England or in America. Some efforts have been made during last one decade to bring out books in India also - books written by Indian authors. No doubt, there have been classics retold series but usually the children are attracted towards the beautifully illustrated and flawlessly printed books from abroad. Such

literature is welcome when there is a need and demand for it, but it has its own drawbacks.

Children's books published in England are, no doubt, par excellence as they have been written for children in England, with an English background, where there are Toms and Dicks, Helens and Marys, green meadows and red tulips, foggy weather covering the Lake District and snow clad mountains smiling in the bright sunshine etc. - all these have been written in conformity with the syllabus prepared for them considering English as their mother tongue, and using vocabulary and structural items to which they are exposed right from the first day they open their eyes to see this curious world, and all this helps them read and enjoy these books. But English is a foreign language for Indian children, and children make special demands on authors. Those books which are based on the social surroundings and behaviour patterns of people in England, have alien background for an average Indian child. He feels lost and disappointed when he fails to achieve what he aims at. No doubt, children of public schools in India can be seen browsing over these books and enjoying themselves, but they are few as compared to the greater population that lives in the villages and small cities of India. These books are not as useful for our children as they are for children in England. Neither our children at the age level

of 10 - 14 are psychologically prepared for these books, nor these books are linguistically suited to them.

American books have a different story altogether. The spelling of words and the formation of structures is quite different from the Queen's English, to which our children are normally exposed from the beginning. They are likely to get confused regarding the correct usage and correct spellings of words. Hence, it is not advisable to expose children to these books at this stage. William Cardell, an author of American juvenile fiction has said :

it is for the books of early instruction, in a great degree to lay the foundation on which the whole superstructure of individual and national greatness must be erected.

He regretted that the greater part of juvenile books, in the United States are foreign, for such books, however worthy,

give a wrong diction to the minds of the young, modelled as they are on a condition of life, and on prevailing sentiments, civil, moral and socialvarying from those which American should early be taught to cherish.⁵⁹

How true and applicable is the statement for Indian children who are exposed to 'imported' literature ever since they get introduced to the world of books in English !

⁵⁹. As quoted by Anne Scott MacLeod, op.cit., p.20.

Thematic analysis of children's books in English available in the country shows that there are areas such as sports and games, fine arts, wild life, social sciences depicting values of civic sense, protection of public property etc., in which books for children need to be written - but this has to be done very carefully - and not to be taken as lightly as it has been done in the past. One has to remember that

children are quick to sense the difference between art and skill in writings prepared for them. They love materials into which have been woven 'leaf and life and love' and they reject the cold steel by pure skill used to provide repetition, readability or to emphasize theme.⁶⁰

Hence the curriculum makers in India, with their fingers on the pulse of society and its demands, should be able to say that the curriculum of the future will be more humanistic - one in which the child will 'search for internalized order'. Adults expect children to like books and to develop taste and judgement in their selection, and those very adults provide just a few, if at all, experiences for children through which they may be able to develop these qualities.

Indian publishers have tried to exploit the situation only from the commercial point of view. No one has

60. Alice M. Burgoyne in "Leaf and Life" published in Elementary English, XLIV, October 1967, p. 657.

considered the capacities of the child who falls a victim to the plans of both the writers and publishers. No one has cared for his language ability while writing these books. The structures of Indian languages have not been transformed into English structures, but are merely and literally translated into English. It is not a surprising thing that some of them contain howlers and bloomers like 'big big stones' and 'seeing stars in the day'. This obviously leads to defective language learning. It is unfortunate, but it is an pleasant truth, and we have to agree with the Nobel Prize winner, Gabriel Mistral, that :

We are guilty of many errors and faults, but our worst crime is abandoning the children, neglecting the very foundation of life. Many of the things we need, can wait. The child cannot. Right now is the time his bones are being formed, his blood is being made, and his senses are being developed. To him we cannot answer 'Tomorrow'. His name is 'Today'.⁶¹

61. Gabriel Mistral as quoted in the Editorial of The Horn Book Magazine, LV:5, October, 1979, p.503.

CHAPTER III

G E N R E

The different themes mentioned in the previous chapter have been dealt with in a variety of forms, offering a wide range of children's literature produced by different authors all over the world. The background, the basis and the approach of these writers has been, and reasonably so, different. This difference in approach is, perhaps, due to cultural heritage of the society of a particular country, as also the language in which the author has attempted his work. However, with the growing international contacts and development of fraternity children's literature of different countries has been translated into various languages - thus making available a large variety of books to them. In this chapter, attempt will be made to analyze the variety in genre pertaining to children's literature available in English to Indian children.

Fiction

According to Hornby, fiction includes stories, novels, romances — invented or imagined, but contrasted with truth — assumed to be true, although false.¹ Janice Elliot says :

1. A.S.Hornby, et. al. Advance Learner's Dictionary,
(London : Oxford University Press. 1965). p. 367.

Angus Wilson once described fiction writing as a 'kind of magic'. So it is ... I have never planned a novel, rather I have waited for it to overtake me, for my subconscious to signal that there may be a world waiting to be uncovered... The signal may haunt me for weeks or months, or possibly for years ...but if it is a true one, (it) will be the key to a wonderful land. Anyone who has shared the experience will know what Françoise Sagan meant when she said in Writers at Work : 'instead of leaving for Chile with a band of gangsters, one stays in Paris, and writes a novel. That seems to me the great adventure'.²

The real test of fiction, whether for adults or for children, is in the quality-response that one receives while reading it, and this quality depends upon the writer's conception of his subject, his treatment of the same as also on the expressions he gives to it. The reactions of a child, while reading a book, are as personal as those of adults. Children are among the most critical of mankind, of their surroundings, of the books they read, of everything they see. But when time comes, they can be as appreciative too. They know exactly what they want, and give no latitude to that. The age group under study is generally very observant and reacts strongly — positively, as well as negatively towards actions and reactions in the environs and in actual life. Many authors have therefore written stories relating happenings from real life situations. Such stories

2. Janice Elliot in "The Intuitive Writer", The Writer, October 1972, pp. 9-10.

can be descriptive or narrative, but for the child growing from the pre-adolescence to adolescence, the story can be developed into a reflective one to emphasize a good social behaviour. These stories, as well as happenings, leave deep impressions on the mind of a child. Lillian Smith has remarked :

The years of childhood are years of wonder, and question and surmise...his(child's) active mind can find in books the material to enrich the experiences of these years inspite of his limited and uneventful environment which is the usual lot of the childhood.... Such stories as Robinson Crusoe, Alice in Wonderland and Huckleberry Finn, have initiated the chief divisions or classes of children's stories: Fantasy, historical fiction and stories of actuality.³

E.B.White once complained that there were too many children's books around. He reflects that one should keep abreast of what the children of a country are reading, because it is the mirror of the age. There is the paradox that old, familiar literary paths lead to new destinations. He laughs at the irony of books on domestic safety in "this year of infinite terror when the desire of everyone is for a safe hole to hide in." He concludes by saying that

it must be a lot of fun to write for children — reasonably easy work, perhaps even important work. Particularly exciting

3. Lillian Smith, The Unreluctant Years (Chicago: American Library Association, 1953), pp.133-134.

would be the search for a place, a period, or a thing that hasn't already been written about."⁴

Perhaps C.S.Lewis was right when he claimed that a book which could only be enjoyed by a child is a poor book, but he could have added that a book exclusively meant for children can hardly be satisfying to the adults because children's books are generally shorter - keeping in view the span of their attention, favouring an active, rather than a passive treatment of theme, full of dialogues and incidents rather than descriptions and introspections of thoughts and reflections. Here the story has a clear-cut scheme, which an adult fiction might ignore. Children's books, on an average tend to radiate optimism rather than depressions through the child-oriented language. Over and above this, here one can go on talking about magic, fantasy, simplicity, adventure, action and so on. Obviously these books differ from adult books in their length, character, language, as also in probabilities - the world of make-believe. Since the ability of the child to grasp and retain is less than that of an adult, his capacity and period of concentration is also shorter and limited. This

4. E.B. White as quoted by Marion Glastonbury in "E.B. White's Unexpected Items of Enchantment in Writers, Critics and Children, edited by Geoff Fox et. al. (New York: Agathon Press, 1976), p.104.

accounts for his books being shorter - mostly depending on the age of the child.

Normally, in a children's book, the main characters will invariably be children, which rarely will be the case in an adult's fiction. If at all a child appears there, it is quite possible for him to represent an adult's point of view - may be as a recollection or a flashback of his own childhood. Seldom will a child appear in an adult's book - as a child, brimming with life and action as he would if he is placed with other children in a children's book. The treatment of theme also differs to a great extent, e.g., it avoids and ignores the 'boy meets girl', the 'usual love lores' or even the 'eternal triangle themes', which go on and on in the adult fiction.

Another important factor is language. If it is beyond the comprehension of a child and lacks elusive quality, which includes its flavour, tone, and force of association, the child's most immediate reaction will be a deep sigh and an exclamation: 'Oh! It's boring!' Myles McDowell says: "The language must have an attractive and interesting personality of its own."⁵

5. Myles McDowell "Fiction for Children and Adults" in Writers, Critics and Children, op.cit., p.155.

And lastly, the adult's habit of rational thinking, of enquiry and explanation stands in the way of enjoyment of a book which has improbabilities written all over it. But what does a child care for them ? He is only concerned with the magic in it, with the charm of incidents and activities in it, and is hardly bothered about any part of the plot - probable or improbable. Adults may try to interpret it for him, but it seems that the child's book has a world of its own, where doors are open only for him. He walks in this world with the author, holding his hand, and goes to the end.

Fantasy

One of the first things lost in the process of growing is what late Sir Herbert Read called the 'innocent eye', that 'virgin freshness' that characterizes a child's view of anything and the 'sense of wonder' with which he apprehends it. Short stories tend to be referred to as fairy tales, and the longer ones as fantasies. So far as myths, legends and fairy tales are concerned, they relate to general experience and come from the mass subconsciousness. Penelope Farmer says that myths deal with much grander matters than fairy tales, concerns of a more universal kind - yet the difference is that of degree not kind, since both

relate to the minds of a people rather than of an individual.

Fantasy, on the other hand, though it may use universal symbols, springs from purely private experiences - it is psychological image, coloured and transformed by the workings of a single mind. ⁶

There are three major questions that a fantasy tends to ask and also tries to answer. They are : 'What if ?' 'Then what ?' and 'So what ?'. It leads the creative imagination to the heart of the 'unseen' which has remained mysteriously hidden so far and puts it into the light of understanding of his readers. According to Nesbit :

There is a curtain, thin as gossamer, clear as glass, strong as iron that hangs forever between the world of magic and the world that seems to us to be real. And when once people have found one of the little weak spots in that curtain which are marked by magic rings, and amulets, and the like, almost anything can happen. ⁷

It may be difficult to explain the true values of fantasy or to account for its shortcomings, but these distinctions stand apart and can easily be recognised when they happen to be present. Perhaps the most 'subtle and profound ideas' ⁸ can be witnessed in the fantasies written for children.

6. Penelope Farmer in "Jorinda and Jorindel and Other Stories", Writers, Critics and Children, Ibid., p.55.

7. G. Nesbit in "The Enchanted Castle" as quoted by Jane Langton in "The Weak Place in the Cloth" appearing in Cross-Currents of Criticism, edited by Paul Heins (Boston: The Hornbook, Inc., 1977); p.185.

8. Lillian Smith, op.cit., p.153.

The area of fantasy has an enormous region, as enchanting as poetry itself. Its obvious characteristics are : originality of concept, inner logic, involvement of the author, a regard for wonder and supernatural, and above all, a mastery of words in writing. Such a writer of fantasy was ✓ Hans Christian Andersen who wrote charming fairy stories.

The Real Princess shows his attitude towards society. The proof which has been made use of to show that the princess was 'real' makes one pause and think how foolish is the basis of the superiority which the so-called 'high' class attaches to itself !

Five Peas in a Pod is an example of his originality. In Thumbelina he has taken the theme of an old tale and has touched it with the magical colours of his imagination. It is the feminine counterpart of Tom Thumb. The Wild Swans is one of Andersen's most delightful tales. What child could resist 'golden slates with diamond pencils', the magic, Elise's trial under the restraint of silence, the dramatic suspense before she is to be burned as a witch and the almost perfect outcome when all are completely restored except one brother ? In its dramatic interest this tale is surpassed only by Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs.

There is a poetic beauty in his language, e.g. :

The sun sank very quickly, it was no bigger than a star, but her foot touched

solid earth. The sun went out like the last sparks of a bit of burning paper.... 9

In The Tinder Box Andersen retells the folktale The Blue Light , where the reader plunges deep into the story by the very first sentence :

A soldier came marching along the high road.
One two ! One two ! He had his knapsack on
his back, and his sword at his side, for he
had been to the wars and he was on his way home
now....10

He took up Cinderella theme of the misunderstood, scorned, humble creature in The Ugly Duckling, who finally comes to his own after much suffering.

In this sequence come the fanciful tales like Ask Mr. Bear by Marjorie Flack, Copy Kitten by Helen and Alf Evers, and Nothing At All by Wanda Gag. These are the types of fantasies to which we need our children to be introduced if we wish them to enjoy reading. Lillian Smith says :

The books are undeniably written on two planes, that of the child and that of the adults. Perhaps it would be truer to say that writing is a language to which the heart of childhood has the little golden key, while the implications of the ideas reveal themselves more and more with the added experience of life.¹¹

9. The Wild Swans as appeared in Anthology of Children's Literature edited by Edna Johnson, et. al. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1959), p. 567.

10. The Tinder Box. Ibid., p. 573.

11. Lillian Smith, op.cit., p.157.

Fantasy provides the child with an opportunity to live in the world of fancies and creativities, where he can roam about, wander and find satisfaction. The question 'What if?' stares him and he tries to find the answer. The writers weave the tapestry of fantasy with the threads of imagination and fill it with different kinds of designs. They can use this cloth in many ways. The fabric may remain the same, but it may be stretched a little out of shape, as Robert McCloskey does in his famous story :

Through the street of Canterbury rolled
Mr. Michael Murphy....The mice came running
from every direction....They all went running
up the ramps and runways and disappeared in
Michael Murphy's musical mouse-trap.¹²

The cloth may be punctured with the needle of creativity and the characters may leak through the hole into another world like Alice does :

In another moment Alice was through the glass,
and had jumped lightly down into the looking-
glass room.¹³

The cloth dividing this and that is rather invisible and totally permeable. The two worlds live side by side, e.g., the young heroine Maria, stumbles upon a hidden colony of the descendents of Lemuel Gulliver's Lilliputians :

She saw : first a square, about eight inches
wide in the lowest step...next she saw a seven

12. Robert McCloskey, Homer Price, (New York: Viking Press, 1971), pp.113-116.

13. Lewis Carroll, Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There. (New York: Macmillan & Co., 1950), p.5.

inch door in the base of the pillar...finally she saw that there was a walnut shell outside the nearest door.... There was a baby in it.¹⁴

Another kind of fantasy has its origin in myth, folk-
lores, and fairy tales. It is the opposite of the first
type. This time we are on the other side of the unbroken
fabric. We are in 'Once-upon-a-Time'. This is well
depicted in the following lines of The Real Princess :

She (the old queen) went into the bedroom,
took all the bed clothes off and laid a pea
on the bedstead; then she took twenty mattresses
and piled them on the top of the pea, and then
twenty feather beds on the top of the mattresses.
This was where the princess was to sleep that
night. In the morning they asked her, how she
had slept.

'Oh! terribly badly!' said the princess.
'I have hardly closed my eyes the whole night.
Heaven knows what was in the bed. I seemed to
be lying upon some hard thing, and my whole
body is black and blue this morning....'¹⁵

It further asks the question: what if the beasts
could talk like human beings? Here animals find their way
through into the real world and take over - there is no
magic now, no spell - like in Miss Bianca Margery Sharp's
white mouse conducts a meeting :

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14. T.H.White, Mistress Masham's Repose. (New York:Putnams, 1946), p.18.
 15. Hans Christian Andersen, The Princess and the Pea or the Real Princess : in Arbuthnot Anthology of Children's Literature (Chicago: Scott Foresman & Co., 1961), p.302.

'And now', said Miss Bianca consulting her notes, 'we come to the main item of agenda... Can every one hear me at the back?'¹⁶

and you know here that this white mouse is conducting the meeting of the Mouse Prisoner's Aid Society.

Then, in another type of fantasy, there may be overlays in time. In certain stories the present moment melts and becomes the past, and in others, someone from an earlier period of history may burst through the cloth dividing what is 'now' and what was 'then', and emerge amongst us being totally astonished and surprised by the present day machine age - the washing machines, refrigerators and cooking-ranges !

In the ghost stories the dead enter the scene and terrorize the living beings :

The phantom stood in the merciless sunshine, a little boy of seven, dressed in old fashioned sailor's suit... The clerk gave a harsh scream and clutched on to the area-railings. He glared down in rage and terror at the ghost of his childhood.¹⁷

Some literary fantasies offer a dream to keep back. Here is one of Lewis Carroll's - straight from the edge

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16. Margery Sharp, Miss Bianca (Boston: Little, Brown, 1962), p.4.
17. Leon Garfield, The Ghost Downstairs. (New York : Pantheon, 1971), p.31.

of the bed :

He thought he saw a Banker's clerk
 Descending from a bus
 He looked again, and found it was
 A hippopotamus.¹⁸

Fantasy is a strongly realized vision. It is the writer himself and his interests and obsessions that count in writing a fantasy and not simply his vague fondness of children or even the good idea he has worked out for them. It has significance, it has symbolism, it has an allegory. All fantasies are dreams. They make one feel a sense of loss when he wakes up and finds his dreams slipping out of his memory.

Children live both in fantasy and in reality, they move back and forth very easily in a way that a grown up no longer remembers how to do.

And in writing for children you must assume that they have this incredible flexibility, this cool sense of the logic of illogic, and that they can move with you easily from one sphere to another without any problems. Fantasy is the core of all writing for children as I think it is for the writing of any book, for any creative act, perhaps for the act of living... there is probably no such thing as creativity without fantasy.¹⁹

18. Lewis Carroll in "Sylvia and Bruno" as quoted by Jane Langton in "The Weak Place in the Cloth. A Study of Fantasy for Children", Crosscurrents in Criticism, op.cit., p.195.

19. Maurice Sendak in "Questions to an Artist who is also an Author": A Conversation between M.Sendak and Virginia Haviland. (Library of Congress, 1972), The Writer, November 1973, p.7.

Fairy Tales

Fairy tales is another rich area attempted by a large number of writers. Children like to imagine a loving, affectionate, attractive motherly figure doing good to others and behaving in a benevolent manner. This trait has been made full use of by authors by way of presenting a fairy descending from the heavens to satisfy the imagination of children. This type of literature is now available practically all over the world. It may not be feasible to trace the origin of literature based on fairy tales but it is a common knowledge that a large number of books in this genre are available in India. Through a fairy tale, a child enters another world - a world of wonders - which is like, and yet surprisingly unlike the world he knows. Here almost anything can and does happen.

My impression is that people in fairy tales behave pretty much the same as people do in real life. Some live by high principles; some are given over to evil ways; some are kindly in disposition, others practice meanness and persecution. Some go adventuring, some stay at home. There are strong and weak people, people with great intelligence, and many with little or none. And in fairy tales each type, with the action that represents it, is brought to life, objectively, emphatically and consistently. Fairy tales do not 'condone' behaviour that is contrary to ethical principle. They simply recognize the fact that it occurs.²⁰

20. Annis Duff, Bequest of Wings (New York: The Viking Press, 1944), p.174.

But Walter de la Mare stresses that above all, it must be remembered that however real and actual the characters, scenes, and events may seem to us as we read, these are 'tales of imagination'.

Up to a point and within their framework, they are reasonable enough; but it is a wild reasonableness. Whether we can accept what they tell us, whether we delight in them or not, depends, then, on how much imagination we have ourselves. It would be merely ridiculous to say that such and such a thing couldn't have happened. It is a world imagined and it is made to happen there.²¹

The Three Billy Goats Gruff is an ideal example of fairy tales from Norse. It depicts the real 'art' of Fairy tales :

Once on a time, there were three billy goats, who were up to the hill side to make themselves fat, and the name of all three was 'Gruff'.

On the way up was a bridge over a stream they had to cross, and under the bridge lived a great ugly Troll, with eyes as big as saucers and nose as large as a poker. So first of all came the youngest billy goat Gruff to cross the bridge.

'Trip, trap; trip, trap', went the bridge.

'Who's that tripping over my bridge?' roared the Troll.

'Oh! It's only I, the tiniest billy goat Gruff, and I'm going up to the hill side to make myself fat,' said the billy goat, with such a small voice.

'Now I'm coming to gobble you up,' said the Troll.

'Oh no, pray don't take me. I am too little, that I am!' said the billy goat; 'wait a bit till the second billy goat Gruff comes, he is much bigger.'

'Well, be off with you,' said the Troll.

A little while after came the second billy goat Gruff to cross the bridge.

21. Walter de la Mare, Animal Stories (New York: Scribner, 1940), p. xxxviii.

'Trip, trap; trip, trap; trip, trap,' went the bridge.
 'Who's that tripping over my bridge?' roared the Troll.
 'Oh! It's the second billy goat Gruff, and I'm going
 up to the hill side to make myself fat,' said the billy
 goat, who hadn't such a small voice.
 'Now I'm coming to gobble you up,' said the Troll.
 'Oh no, don't take me; wait a little till the big
 billy goat Gruff comes - he's much bigger.'
 'Very well, be off with you,' said the Troll.
 But just then, up came the big billy goat Gruff.
 'TRIP, TRAP; TRIP, TRAP; TRIP, TRAP', went the bridge,
 for the billy goat was so heavy that the bridge creaked and
 groaned under him.
 'Who's that tramping over my bridge?' roared the Troll.
 'IT'S I - THE BIG BILLY GOAT GRUFF,' said the billy
 goat, who had an ugly hoarse voice of his own.
 'Now I'm coming to gobble you up,' roared the Troll.
 'Well, come along; I've got two spears,
 And I'll poke your eyeballs out at your ears,
 I've got besides two curling stones,
 And I'll crush you to bits, body and bones.'
 That was what the big billy goat said; and so he flew
 at the Troll and poked his eyes out with his horns, and
 crushed him to bits, body and bones, and tossed him out
 into the stream, and after that he went up to the hill side.
 There the billy goats got so fat that they were scarcely
 able to walk home again; and if the fat has not fallen off
 them, why, they're still fat; and so;
 'Snip, snap, snout,
 This tale's told out.²²

One cannot but help noticing the brevity with which
 the story is told. There are no details concerning the
 story. In fact they are reduced to the bare minimum. Yet,
 within its limited span, there is action, there is
 environment, there is character, which gives it a distinctive
 Norse feeling. It has an arresting opening, it is full of
 dramatic action, suspense, climax and a well-rounded story.

22. P.C. Asbjornsen, East of the Sun and West of the Moon
 (New York: Macmillan, 1953), p. 38.

Fairy tales have universal appeal and this fact has led to a multiplicity of versions for children throughout the world. But, the folk tales of individual peoples have little value as a part of literature, if they only repeat the events of stories in different languages. Fairy tales play the same part as any other literary art form does in the literary and imaginative development of a child. Many a time the literary critics use fairy tales as

striking examples of story construction, dramatic quality, pervading tone, character delineation, clarity of theme, intensity of action, effective dialogue and other significant traits...because the best of these tales exhibit striking qualities, free from the complexities of more sophisticated literature.²³

There can be so many reasons as to why children should be exposed to fairy tales. In fact, it is the duty of adults in home and school to encourage and help develop and expand children's reading interest by making available to them a variety of literature. They can be given special treats with 'story-telling' sessions which can serve as incomparable baits to an expanded experience with books.

Children have at least one quality in common - and

23. Anney E. Moore. Literature Old and New for Children. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1934), pp. 95-96.

that is, imagination. Arbuthnot says :

They stretch the mind and spirit with their dreams. It is this quality of wonder and speculation that makes them (stories) worth using with children.²⁴

It seems that in the absence of fairy tales and their encouraging messages, life can become unbearable for the young child. The pleasure he derives from a fairy tale is a testimony regarding his capacity to lift the hustle-bustle and humdrum of life on to a higher plane, providing it with a symbolic significance — may be temporarily in the form of fantasy. A child deprived of fairy tales, according to Dr. Bettelheim, is deprived of fantasies they offer, the solutions they suggest; the deeper meaning of life they allude to, while promising that it can be attained in the future. He goes on to add :

On the surface these stories may seem re-inforcement of irrationality; but on a deeper level, they reveal truths to the child that she would be hard-pressed to find in other contexts. The fairy tales permit the child to perceive such truths without her conscious awareness; by speaking directly to the child as a not-yet rational being, they transmit that would otherwise be lost on her. Children cannot assimilate truths couched in adult terms; fairy tales work because they depict the child's problems the way a child sees them.²⁵

24. May Hill Arbuthnot. Anthology of Children's Books, op.cit., p.ix.

25. Br. Brunno Bettelheim in "Bringing Up Children" (as appeared in "Ladies' Home Journal", October 1973), quoted in The Writer, December 1973, p.5.

Thus fairy tales literature is one of the great kinds containing a body of stories that do what no other literature does. On the wings of fairy tales the child takes flight to a dateless time the moment it starts, 'Once there was...', and speaks with assurance of wishes and fears. There is no mention of 'dos' and 'don't's', no aims at moralizing. There is no sense of 'art' either, because its ways and means are different, because there are so many stories to tell, and so many ways to tell the same story. The term 'fairy tales' is only a matter of convenience, because a few stories which we call by that name, contain fairies and elves or similar features. Yet, everyone seems to agree on what the term fairy tale includes, or even excludes, even though they easily blend into related kinds like myths, legends, romances, realistic folk-fables, etc. As such while Cinderella, Sinbad the Sailor, and Hansel and Gretel are fairy tales, the stories of King Arthur, Pandora, Patent Griselda and The Ancient Mariner are not. //

The very existence of fairy tales is an evidence of the cultural oneness throughout the Eurasian Continent. Roger Sale has commented that

Comparative folk-lorists have managed to uncover characters, events and motifs that appear often with only slight changes in tales told in India, Japan, France, Germany, and Ireland.²⁶

26. Roger Sale, Fairy Tales and After. (London: Harvard University Press, 1978), pp. 24-25.

The only thing is that these stories have been given different twists and emphasises while they were developed as distinctively native or local tales. The 'ancient' element of these tales, their curious persistence in so many different countries, their strength of oral tradition may have faded out nowadays, but all this has definitely helped to make them a kind of literature which has to be treated with great care and respect if at all one desires to know them.

There is an interesting and crucial point about fairy tales — that over the years they 'became' children's literature, a property to be owned only by them — they were nothing of the sort for most of their long years of existence. As stated earlier, childhood never existed for most of the children. Philip Aries says,

In the middle ages at the beginning of modern times, and for a long time after that in the lower classes, children were mixed with adults as soon as they were considered capable of doing without their mothers or nannies...(age of seven). They immediately went straight into the great community of men, sharing in the work and play of their companions, old and young alike.²⁷

According to Tolkein these stories

have now a mythical or total (unanalysable) effect...they open a door on Othertime, and if we pass through, though only for a moment, we stand outside our own time, outside Time itself, may be .²⁸

27. Philip Aries in Centuries of Childhood as quoted by Roger Sale, op.cit., p.26.

28. J.R.R. Tolkein in Tree and Leaf. Ibid., pp.44-45.

And here is Elizabeth Cook supporting him :

There is another door that can be opened by reading legends and fairy tales, and for some children, at the present time, there may be no other key to it.²⁹

There can be hardly a child who does not know the story of Cinderella. As long back as in 1697, Charles Perrault, the author of Cinderella, had published his 'Histoires' with a sub-title Mother Goose Tales. He had written the first children's stories which can be regarded as a point of origin and change. The period to which he belonged, was pivotal, so far as the history and invention of childhood is concerned in France. This period was important for another reason as well i.e. for several collections of fairy tales in the country. It was Perrault who had designed, cut and made the stories for children, and he did so with such perfection that they have created a history. No wonder that even a free translation of Cinderella by Marcia Brown (Scribner, 1954) won her the Caldecott Medal in 1955. Perrault's other story Puss in the Boots is a love for children even today. Both stories are distinguished for story tellers and children alike. Paul Hazard, while speaking of Perrault's art of story telling, remarks :

Perrault is as fresh as dawn. We never reach the end of his accomplishments. He is full of mischief, humour and charming dexterity. He never seems to be achieving a tour-de-force,

29. Ibid., p.45.

lifting a weight, looking for applause, but he seems to be having more fun than anyone, relating these prodigious stories entirely for his own pleasure.³⁰

The name of Hans Christian Andersen is synonymous to fairy tales. He appeared on the scene almost after the century. He wrote these fairy tales with a personal touch, e.g. :

The emperor of China is a Chinese, as of course you know, and the people he has about him are Chinese too (The Nightingale), or,

Far out at sea the water is as blue as the bluest cornflower and as clear as the clearest glass; but it is very deep, deeper than any anchor cable can fathom. (The Little Mermaid).

While he aims at satiric shafts, he points out his morals and adorns his tales. Since children's literature was written by adults for children, the authors were rather tempted to establish a relation between the audience and the story teller rather than the teller and the tale. They knew their audience - the children - pretty well, but they never bothered to change or adapt the tales for them. They had a great respect of their material - too great to change it. It is interesting to note that when the emphasis shifted to children and their literature, the adults started

30. Paul Hazard. Books, Children and Men. (Boston: Horn Book, Inc., 1944), p.9.

contemplating about their audience who were to hear, and read these stories and they tended to get lost in the false rhetorics as it happens in Andersen's The Nightingale, e.g., "The emperor of China..." and so on. Roger Sale says,

Andersen was always improvising outfitting objects and animals with his own feelings, and so seldom stopped to respect the nature of his characters.³¹

The fairy tale, according to H.W. Mabie is

a poetic recording of the facts of life, an interpretation by the imagination of its hard conditions, an effort to reconcile the spirit which loves freedom and goodness and beauty with its harsh, bare and disappointing conditions....³²

But there is a group of people like Goodrich, who do not seem to like children to be exposed to fairy tales. Their objection to them is that these were

calculated to familiarize the mind with things shocking and monstrous; to cultivate a taste for tales of bloodshed and violence; to teach the young to use coarse language, and cherish vulgar ideas Had it been said that these books were calculated to make criminals of a large part of the children who read them, I think, the truth would have been ...fairly stated.³³

31. Roger Sale. op.cit., pp.68-69.

32. Hamilton Wright Mabie. Fairy Tales Every Child Should Know. (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1914), pp. vi-vii.

33. Samuel Goodrich in "Recollections" 2:320-321, as quoted by Anne Scott MacLeod in A Moral Tale (Connecticut: Archon Books, 1975), p. 24.

Still, there can be no two words about it that children have given evidence of their preferences by loving Cinderella, The Sleeping Beauty, Hansel and Gretel, Little Red Riding Hood, Golden Goose, The Three Spinning Fairies, The Frog Prince, etc. over the centuries. It would be right to say that those who do not like these tales of imagination, of fantasy, they have forgotten their own childhood. Brian Hooker says :

Your wife can hardly, being a woman, dislike the Butterfly That Stamped. It is possible, however, that she may remain indifferent to it a trifle, a playing with fancies, of obvious purport, silly in its language unworthy of attention. This simply means that she is educated above its knowledge, that she has outgrown it — in a word, that she is old.³⁴

Fables

Another very popular genre is developing an accepted social concept through a story or a fable. The children's literature, in order to serve as an important reading, should essentially be rich in the language content and it should also help developing essential character traits in a growing child to enable him to become an acceptable, useful member of the society. Fables play an important role in the development of the total personality of a child. They either develop into a tale from a moral or

34. Brian Hooker in "The Types of Fairy Tales" as quoted by Lillian Smith, op.cit., p. 41.

end up with a moral, and the author here selects such a moral from the cultural heritage and accepted social concepts of the society.

But of all forms of fiction, fable is supposed to be the most 'pedantic' and the 'least appealing' to the children because it is a lesson in behaviour, a kind of 'sugar-coated moral pill', large doses of which are difficult to take. It is intriguing to note that even then it is presented occasionally with other livelier kinds of stories, perhaps because, according to May Hill Arbuthnot, fables are unpalatable.

They offer shrewd appraisal of motives and behaviours. Their uncanny and satiric comments on folly are amusing and wise behaviour is picturesquely presented. ³⁵

In fact, fables like Dog in the Manger, The Wolf in Sheep's Clothing, The Fox and the Crow, The Hare and the Tortoise, The Boy Who Cried Wolf, The Crow and the Pitcher, and The Milkmaid and Her Pail, etc., may not be favourites of children, but they are unforgettable.

The fables are brief narratives in which attempt is made to concretise the abstract ideas of good or bad, of wise or foolish behaviour in a striking way to enable the

35. May Hill Arbuthnot in Anthology of Children's Literature, op.cit., p.222.

child to understand and remember it. But since they are mainly concerned with abstract ideas of good and evil, they are not as readily accepted and understood by children until the episodes, stories, and their significance and importance is repeated to and talked over with them. Sometimes the characters are human beings, sometimes certain elements, but mostly they are animals. Whatever they are, "they are impersonal and abstract as an algebraic equation."³⁶

This abstract and impersonal quality of fables does not appeal to children and if the fables are used too often or with too heavy a hand, children get restless. The teaching of the moral lesson gets tiresome and the very purpose of the fable is defeated. They are for occasional use and they should be discussed and presented with a light touch and minimum pedantry. They have a

teasing likeness to proverbs and parables, and embody universal truths in brief, striking form; and all these are highly intellectual exercises, as exact as any equation.³⁷

Fables have various sources. As long back as the 14th century a monk named Planudes prefixed a story of Aesop's life to a book of fables supposedly those of

36. Ibid., p.223.

37. Ibid., pp.282-283.

Aesop. This was translated into Latin in the 1st and 3rd centuries and attained the position of text books of medieval schools. Through Latin they found their way into England, France and Germany, and were later on translated into several other languages.

The Panchatantra is the oldest known collection of Indian fables, containing the most widely known stories in the world. Since the stories of The Panchatantra are very ancient it is not possible to give an accurate report of their genesis. Dr. Hertel, the learned editor of the text of these stories where from these were translated by Arthur. Ryder, believed that "the original work was composed in Kashmir about 200 B.C."³⁸ Assuming various forms in India itself, then travelling in translations, and translations of translations, through Persia, Arabia, Syria, and the civilized countries of Europe, these stories have for more than twenty centuries provided wisdom and brought delight to hundreds of millions.

One Vishnu Sharman, shrewdly gleaming
All worldly wisdom's inner meaning
In these five books the charm compressed
Of all such books the world possessed.³⁹

(Introduction to The Panchatantra)

38. Arthur Ryder (tr.) The Panchatantra (Bombay: Jaico Publishing House, 1949), p.3.

39. Ibid., p.12.

In the southern country's city named Maiden's Delight lived a king 'Immortal Power' who had three sons. Their names were Rich Power, Fierce Power, and Endless Power and they were 'supreme block-heads'. They were hostile to education. The king was advised by his counsellors to entrust them to Pandit Vishnu Sharman for being made wise and intelligent. When the king summoned Vishnu Sharman and offered him a hundred land-grants if he could make the princes masters in the art of practical life, he said, 'I am not the man to sell good learning for a hundred land-grants. But if I don't, in six months time, make the boys acquainted with the art of intelligent living, I will give up my own name.'⁴⁰

He then took the boys and went home and made them learn by heart the five books which he composed and called (1) The Loss of Friends (2) The Winning of Friends (3) The Crows and Owls (4) Loss of Games and (5) Ill-considered Action.

The princes learnt them and in six months time they stood up to the expectation. Thereafter Panchatantra, the work on intelligent living has travelled far and wide providing and awakening intelligence in the young.

The Hitopdesha or 'The Book of Good Counsel' is considered to be another version of The Panchatantra.⁴¹ Both the collections were translated into Persian, Arabian, Latin, and many other languages of the world. 'The Jatakas'

⁴⁰. Ibid., p.13.

⁴¹. Joseph Gaer, The Fables of India as quoted by May Hill Arbuthnot in Children and Books (Chicago: Scott Foresman and Company, 1957), p. 285.

is yet another collection of Indian fables. It is believed that these are the stories concerning the rebirth of Lord Buddha, who, according to Indian belief, was reincarnated many a time in the forms of different animals until at last he became Buddha, the Enlightened One. Thus, these stories are about a human being living for a brief period as an animal, consorting with other animals and deriving ethical lessons from his experiences.

While reading a fable which is just an abstraction, a brief sermon, a maxim, the child's heart never beats with sympathy for its characters. He remains impersonal and unemotional to the exemplifications of virtue or folly. The children of 10 to 12 years of age can read for themselves and may not enjoy a good collection of Aesop's fables or the Jataka tales which might lead them to discover the fable-like qualities in some of the modern tales such as The Story of Ferdinand by Munro Leaf. But too many excursions into morals may lead to a distaste for reading amongst children. The baffled child who defies a fable or an allegory as a story where everything is what it is not, leaves a clue for the grown-ups to know what they are about to do with him.

Folk Tales

Every society has a rich heritage of folklore and folk tales. This heritage is passed on from generation

to generation orally by relating the tales to the new generation. Generally these tales are based on the culture prevalent in a particular society and the underlying objective of these folk tales is to instil in the new generation certain qualities and texture of the society to which they belong. India has been rich in her heritage of folklore and folk tales and these have already seen the light of the day in the form of reading material.

In an introduction to 'Yes and No Stories' Papashvilies wrote :

a story is a letter that comes to us from yesterday. Each who tells it, adds his words to the message and sends it on to tomorrow.⁴²

These tales which have transcended from the past are difficult to be distinguished as folk tales or fairy tales. Many folk tales include fairies, elves, and gnomes, while fairy tales also have come down through the centuries from one story teller to another. Thompson has defined folk tales as

...all forms of narrative, written or oral, which have come to be handed down through the years. In this usage the important fact is the traditional nature of the material.⁴³

42. George and Hellen Papashvily, Yes and No Stories: A Book of Georgian Folk Tales. (New York: Harper and Bros., 1946), p.5.

43. S. Thompson, The Folk Tale. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1951), p.4.

Wanda Gag has very correctly expressed her views on folk tales when she wrote :

...this is an old, old story. When I was a little girl my grandmother told it to me. When she was a little girl, she heard it from her grandfather and when he was a little boy in Bohemia his mother told it to him. Where she heard it from, I do not know, but you can say, it is an old, old story.⁴⁴

It is curious that in an age as realistic and mechanized as ours, the folk tales and their magic can still cast their spell on children. Folk tales which come as a legend from the anonymous story tellers of the past, still have the capacity to charm and attract the child of the modern age of science, though it is true that nowadays the child gets interested in them later than one can imagine and perhaps wears them out a little too sooner. It has been noticed that after the age of nine there is a

continued and diminishing interest in such stories through the ages of ten, eleven, and twelve years.⁴⁵

There are quite a few theories regarding the origin of folk tales. The first amongst them is the Aryan myth theory - sometimes known as the theory of 'Monogenesis' or single origin. According to it there was a language

⁴⁴. Wanda Gag in "Gone is Gone" (Introduction), Coward McCann, Inc., as quoted by Lillian Smith, op.cit., p.20

⁴⁵. May Hill Arbuthnot, in Anthology of Children's Literature, op.cit., p.2.

group known as Aryan. It had a pure racian strain and all folk tales sprang from this one and single source. This theory, of course, has been discredited now. Next to that is the theory of many origins, i.e., polegenesis. This grew out of belief. Some people were of the opinion that basically human nature is the same all over the world and that human beings react in the same way, and therefore, would create the same kind of stories wherever they are. Andrew Lang and others were of the opinion that similar stories and plots could develop at different ends of the world if the situations were common to people there.

Another thinking is that these tales grew out of dreams and nightmares and the story-tellers enacted them to satisfy their own unconscious desires leading to frustrations. According to the psychoanalytic writers these stories were symbols of emotional fantasy.

But the recent belief is that these are the "Cement of Society".⁴⁶ According to social anthropologists these were the carriers of moral code, reflecting and teaching kindness, hard work, and courage through stories and revealing the ultimate rewards of their virtues.

There is a freshness and spontaneity about folk art that still has power to move us, and this old magic is nowhere more potent than in traditional stories. Children call them fairy

46. Ibid., p.3.

tales and adults rather stuffily classify them as folk tales - tales of enchantment and wonder flowing from all peoples of the globe.⁴⁷

If we try to have a look around the folk tales all over the world we almost start with the Grimm Brothers of Germany who may be said to have started the modern science of folklore. It is said that while in France Perrault (1628-1703) altered his tales to suit the tastes of his time, Grimm Brothers J.L. Carl Grimm (1785-1863) and W. Carl Grimm (1786-1895) in Germany began their work with a great concern for their sources. They are said to have undertaken the collection of tales as a part of a vast and scholarly research in language origins. They were keen on getting the language of the people printed exactly in the form it was used by them and they succeeded in doing so. To read their stories is to find a 'strange refreshment' because these are gloomy stories of children who are to defend for themselves but who evidently find love and security after all the hardships they face.

Amongst the Norwegian popular tales, the stories of P.C. Asbjornsen in the collection East of the Sun and West of the Moon, can probably be ranked with Grimms' tales. The Three Billy Goats Gruff we have already talked about.

47. May Hill Arbuthnot, Children and Books, op.cit., p.235.

It is a matchless tale to tell and is admirable in plot and economy of words. East of the Sun and West of the Moon seems to be a fragment of an ancient myth. Polar bear symbolizes winter in the northern country. The tale is a romance which satisfies all the usual desires for food, warmth, luxury, security and love.

So far as British folk tales are concerned, Joseph Jacob's (1854-1916) tales are remarkable for their giant killers, humour and quite a large number of them is suitable for younger children, e.g., The Old Woman and Her Pig falls naturally into a humorous chant which children enjoy. Teeny Tiny in its repetitive form provides a musical charm for children and they love to listen to it, even repeat it over and over again. Master of Masters presents a beautiful comedy where the girl gives a longwinded warning to her master about the fire in the house. And, of course, there is the well-known History of Tom Thumb ! Andersen's Thumbelina is another variant of this tale.

As stated earlier, Germany offered Grimm's tales - The Elves and the Shoemaker has an excellent plot, though its dullness of style can be improved by introducing conversation here and there. The Four Musicians has a wonderful story to tell and children in the West have enjoyed dramatizing it. In one version the rhyme of cock crows, 'cuck, cuck, cuck, cuddoo-oo!' is misunderstood by

the robber who thinks that someone is calling 'cut the man in two-oo!' This makes the children fall into fits of laughter. Hansel and Gretel, The Frog King, Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs hardly need any introduction.

France has given immortal tales like Cinderella, The Master Cat or Puss in the Boot, Beauty and the Beast, Little Red Riding Hood, The Sleeping Beauty, etc. The names of Perrault, Walter de la Mare and Andrew Lang will always be remembered. Cinderella has been a favourite theme of fiction for writers of all ages - the misunderstood, lovely maiden who finally comes into her own. It is no wonder that folk tales record nearly three hundred and fifty variants of this story all over the world. Like East of the Sun and West of the Moon, Beauty and the Beast also has a charm of its own. Beauty's compassion and finally her love for the beast has an appeal. Beauty is able to see beyond Beast's ugly exterior to his goodness - and this makes the story immortal.

The American folk tales can be grouped as American Negro tales, native variant of European tales, tall tales and other naive inventions. America has been the recipient of folk tales and folklore from all over the world. Amongst these The Gingerbread Boy, which is an American variety of a Norse folk tale The Pancake and Jack and the Robbers, the American version of The Four Musicians, are very well-known.

And from India originated a multitude of talking-beasts tales and several other stories which have an entertaining quality inspite of being carriers of moral and religious lessons. These were transmitted to the West during the twelfth century through Arabic and Persian translations. These were also "carried to the West by merchants and crusaders. This is the reason that certain scholars have assumed that ancient India was the source of all folk tales. In 1859 Theodore Beufey, the noted German Sanskrit scholar proved that

the Hindus, even before their acquaintance with the animal fables of Aesop, which they received from the Greeks, had invented their own compositions of a similar kind, and a great many of them at that.⁴⁸

The Indian fables reflect the Hindu belief in the transmigration of souls. It bears also to the characteristic style in which one story is related with the frame of another like a series of boxes within boxes.

Now the question is, what makes these folk tales so popular with children? Do they satisfy some of their needs? What are the elements in these stories which enable the children derive pleasure from them ?

48. Smith Thompson, "The Folktale" as quoted by Edna Johnson, op.cit., p.319.

Yes, the form, the style as well as the character portrayed in the folk tales is certainly and distinctly different from those of the modern short stories. It is curious to note that the folk tales satisfy both children and adults alike. Their pattern is clear cut.

First of all the folk tale introduces the reader to the main character, the time and place of the story, the particular theme and the problem to be solved in the very beginning.

Usually the folk tales have clear cut, robust themes which are capable of supporting good plots. They often involve the element of contrast - sometimes there is uneven conflict which always makes a story exciting. ⁴⁹

e.g. Hansel and Gretel and the wicked witch - where two little children struggle with evil power. The themes of the folk tales are understandable. They have everything for winning security, earning a living or a place in the world, fighting the old outwitting schemes, and succeeding in the end. As soon as the child reads 'Once upon a time...', or 'Long ago and far away...', he is at once

transported to a dreamland, where anything and everything is possible. The scene of action is very briefly sketched. It could be a road, a forest, a palace, a poor man's hut or anything

49. May Hill Arbuthnot, Children and Books, op.cit., p.256.

for that matter, and that's all. No distracting details are given, no boring descriptions provided, and no time wasted. Then the development of the story takes place - that is really the plot, which unfolds the actions, the doings, of the character, maintaining the logic, unity and economy.⁵⁰

And the conclusion comes as swiftly and briefly as the introduction. It, according to May Hill Arbuthnot,

should follow swiftly on the heels of the climax and should end everything that was started in the introduction. Not only must the heroes and heroines achieve a happy solution for their troubles and a triumphant end to their struggles, but the villains are accounted for and satisfyingly punished. The conclusions satisfy the child's eye-for-an-eye code of ethics and apparently leaves his imagination untroubled.⁵¹

Stories and Novels

Authors have explored all regions possible to tell stories to children - stories concerning their immediate environment, home and school, stories giving them thrills and providing them with adventures in life, stories which are full of mystery, and realistic stories. In a way, turning from fairy tales to realism may give an impression of a descent from romance and adventure, fantasy and imagery to a prosaic and dull literature. But the case is quite different because, if written properly, realistic stories

50. Ibid., p. 257.

51. Ibid., p. 259.

can be every bit as exciting and humourous, or even as romantic and imaginative as those powerful tales of the past.

Children progress gradually, and in the process they shift from picture books to illustrated books when pictures are of secondary importance, to the unillustrated stories of everyday life, where they just have to visualize things through descriptions given therein. Children, prior to the nineteenth century when they were victims of didacticism, could not really say : 'Its high time that someone wrote stories just about us - about everyday life of children like us!' But someone did it finally and others followed him.

The reading tastes of children have undergone a change. Books of fantasy appear to be declining in numbers, quality and readership. Books about 'real life' are on the increase.

Most literature deals consciously or unconsciously with the problems of reality : It asks what is real in the world, which values are real, which without foundation, and therefore false or evil. One can often see on stage the manifestation of plot to bring about the unmasking of appearances, since drama is a spectacle severely limited by time and place though it is not always certain what has been exercised and what acclaimed as real.⁵²

52. Joyce Carol Oates in "The Edge of Impossibility : Tragic Forms in Literature" (Vanguard) as quoted in The Writer, October 1972, p.5.

Novels

Novel is a very important style of story-telling. Perhaps most of the fiction in various languages of the world consists of novel, which is generally a long story covering a volume or a number of volumes based on real happenings - historical or fictitious, imaginary happenings - happenings designed to express social reaction towards evil and unsocial behaviour. The author tries to pad in his work thrills and mysteries surrounding everyday life in a society. Francois Maurice once remarked :

Every novelist ought to invent his own technique that is in the fact of it. Every novel worthy of the name is like another planet, whether large or small, which has its own laws just as it has its own flora and fauna. A novel is the sum total of what you have learnt about life...It is only as interesting as the people who come to life in it.⁵³

Generally the writer has an aim towards which he tries to carry his readers through inter-woven incidents and happenings. In this effort he tries to add interesting anecdotes either real or imaginary, to make the reader go through the work and reach the ultimate aim.

Recently, the writers of children's books have tried to make maximum use of this style. Some of the literature procured abroad and also in India provides imaginary but

53. Hannah Lees, "Every Novel is Like Another Planet", The Writer, October 1972, pp. 12-13.

interesting children's stories full of thrill and mysteries. Some of them are rich in language content and try to develop in children a pattern of social behaviour towards other family members, neighbours, poor, etc., as also their general behaviour. The thrilling mysteries recovered in such works try to develop certain essential character traits, like development of courage by eliminating fear, etc. Since these works provide a thrilling story, this type of literature is very popular amongst the children of this age group. Milne says :

The writing of children's books is even more of a gamble, whether one is doing it for art's sake or the butcher's, than the writing of a novel. On the one hand they have the insistent competition of their forerunners to meet, as novels have not; on the other hand, if once they join their competitors on equal terms, then they...will outlive many a better novel of the same season.⁵⁴

Whether novel or story, it can be called straight fiction, which is purely for amusement and makes no pretense of instruction. Among these are countless mystery and adventure stories, e.g., the two most distinguished novels in 1977, according to Mercier, are I am the Cheese by Robert Cromier (Pantheon) and Leave Well Enough Alone by Rosemary Wells (Dial) and both are mysteries.⁵⁵

54. A.S.Milne, Books for Children (compiled by National Book League), (London: Cambridge University Press, 1924), pp. 95-96.

55. Jean F. Mercier, Starting Young: Detective and Mystery Stories, Publisher's Weekly, 213:65, March 13, 1978, p. 64.

The current classification of children's books which cuts across all groups of realistic fiction is the mystery story. It holds this position in all countries and in all times. In fact a mystery tale is

certainly an example of the way in which children's books parallel predominant trends in adult reading interests The extreme popularity of the mystery tale at present is undoubtedly a current fad, as far as children are concerned, artistically stimulated by adult emphasis.⁵⁶

At their worst such books are marked by 'preposterous plots', details left unaccounted for, too many episodes, violence after violence, typical and stereotyped characters and above all, poor style. But there are certain virtues of these tales, especially for children. They create atmosphere of excitement and suspense. Children who are addicted to comic-strip kind of reading, demand a highly spiced book if at all they are going to read. The mystery fiction - novels or stories - are usually full of adventure with plenty of breath-taking action in them and have the capacity to keep the thrill-seekers completely absorbed. Moreover, they help silent reading, may be a little skipping and skimming in the process, thus developing reading habit in children. Stevenson's Treasure Island is one of such kinds.

56. May Hill Arbuthnot, Children and Books, op.cit., p.425.

Tots to teenagers, all find a treasure trove of suspense fare in stores and libraries. There are even wordless puzzlers for those who have not learnt to read...most endearing and enduring one, The Mystery of the Giant Footprints by Fernando Krahn (Dutton), The Adventure of Albert B. Cub and Zebra by Anne Rockwell (Crowell) and the delightful picture books by Mary Rayner--Laughter is an extra, in collaborations of Elizabeth Levy and Mordicai Gerstein, too.⁵⁷

Mercier goes on to quote from books of Jay Bennett, Richard Beck, John Kahn, etc., and concludes that addiction to mysteries is acquired early and lasts.

Reading a story or a novel is not something one does by himself. It is transaction. It involves at least the reader and the writer. It is a continuous part of social experience. Its being like an onlooker of human actions, since one does not identify with characters in a novel nor does he live through wish-fulfilment. One responds to a total situation depicted in a novel. It is a social action. Reading is also evaluative, though the value judgment may change with time. Fred Inglis says :

In one rapid and elaborate process of evaluation, we understand ourselves to be considering new human potentialities in the company of the author.⁵⁸

57. Jean F. Mercier, op.cit., pp. 65-66.

58. Fred Inglis, "Reading Children's Novels: Notes on Politics of Literature" in Geoff Fox's Writers, Critics and Children, (New York: Agathon Press, 1976), p. 169.

Crime fiction is another category which children love to read, though it does not have much concern with being a part of literature.... Its primary aim is to give pleasure through suspense. Spy stories, wherein a smart young person outwits adults in detecting the criminals, are popular both because they satisfy the ego of the reader and because they give him the illusion of being connected with war. There is no end to situations like the loss of a new car loaned unwillingly by elders of the family and locked by the young boy in a safe place; shop-lifting with suspicion directed towards an innocent girl or returning of the family late at night after seeing a film and finding the front door wide open. There can be innumerable settings which stimulate curiosity and make the child go through the book with pleasure.

Crime fiction has always been, and will remain, primarily an entertainment created by popular demand, whether its form is that of a detective story, spy story, or crime novel. Most of it has little to do with literature, but is designed to give pleasure.... The medium has limitations, and its writers too have them. There is something in all crime novelists and detective story writers that demands the puzzle element in a book, or at least the element of uncertainty and suspense.... In the highest reaches of the crime novel, it is possible to create a work of art, but because of their sensationalism they will always be works of slightly flawed kind.⁵⁹

59. Julian Symons, 'Moral Consequences' (Harper & Row) as quoted in The Writer, December 1972, p.5.

Then there is a detective fiction which

belongs to the kind of narrative properly called the 'tale'. It is a genre distinct from the 'novel' The tale does not pretend to social significance nor does it probe the depths of the soul. The characters it presents are not persons but types; the rich man, the servant, the camel driver (now a chauffeur)... The tale much older than the novel appeals to curiosity, wonder and love of ingenuity. If it 'studies' anything, it is the calculating mind rather than the spontaneous emotions, material predicaments rather than spiritual.⁶⁰

It is interesting to think about why adventure story is so universally popular. The desire for adventure begins as soon as the child can escape the watchful eyes of parents and goes on as long as he has the vitality to swing it. Behind it is the urge of growth which never allows the child to sit still and let things happen.

Robinson Crusoe, the ever popular fiction, was perhaps the first successful treatment of adventures. Its theme of man's successful struggle against nature has been extremely popular. Robinson says,

In the adventure story the emphasis is on action. Yet, since this action is determined by the kind of a character which the hero possesses, a certain amount of characterisation is essential to arrive at the reality of action. Character must be expressed by action. Action is determined by character. The old problem of egg and hen.⁶¹

60. Jacques Barzun and W.H. Taylor in their 'Introduction' to "A Catalogue of Crime" (Harper & Row), as quoted in The Writer, January 1972, p.5.

61. Mable Louise Robinson, Writing for Young People (New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1950), p. 47.

Whether the novel contains an adventure, mystery or crime or even a family story, it must give pleasure to children who read it, give them imaginative pre-experience of some of the complexities of actual living.

Drama

Dramatization is reflected right from the early childhood of a human being. As the child grows, he starts imagining things and jumps at an opportunity when he can express his imagination by dramatization. To begin with, the childish pranks are dramatized to express emotions and imagination. However, with the physiological, psychological and mental growth of the child, the behaviour pattern changes and like stories and novels children sometimes prefer to read and then enact it. Though few, yet dramas have been written. They include one-act plays, short plays, or long dramas depicting various settings, environments, circumstances, etc., to elaborate an idea. This type of literature generally does not form a reading material as it is a visual literature. But children do read them when they have to select and to stage it, and also to participate in it.

Social living is learnt by taking part in social situations and the natural occasion for much of

the young child's learning is through play.⁶²

Mrs. Langdon considers dramatization as 'projected play'. The young adolescent wants an urgent attention and respect because of being at one moment grown up and at another, a child and then getting lost again. He is at times highly energetic, yet at other times lacks it altogether. One may find happiness, sadness, confidence, shyness, curiosity boredom overflowing at any moment. The children at this age do not know themselves and they need tremendous help - they need training in the emotions as in other subjects. The small plays considering the Indian situation, written by G.S.Bhandari, et. al. in Read and Act Series (Orient Longmans) are the only ones we can think about.

The drama is often used...for playing out situations in which the individual has to make decisions about morals. By making situation conscious, the child is able to look at life as an observer, and make slow, inward decisions. There is often a remarkable capacity for learning at this age, and there is a certain danger that too much may be forced upon the child. It is very important that out-flow should balance in-flow.⁶³

62. Mrs. E.M. Langdon in "Dramatic Works with Children" as quoted by Peter Slade in Child Drama (London : University of London Press, 1973), pp. 33-34.

63. Mrs. E.M.Langdon. Ibid., p.74.

Poetry

The child in the primary school is the same child who responded so surely and naturally to rhyme and rhythm as a baby and as a pre-school child. Many publishers have realized the need for a modern approach to format of poetry books, and some of the most attractive and vital school libraries are books of poetry, e.g., The Oxford Book of Poetry compiled by Edward Bilshen and illustrated by Brian Smith. Walter de la Mare spoke of poetry thus :

That is one of the pleasures of reading - you may make any picture out of the words you can and will; and a poem may have as many different meanings as there are different minds.... I choose what I like best - those, that when I read them, never failed to carry me away, as if on a magic carpet, or in seven league boots, into a region of their own. When the nightingale sings, other birds, it is said, will sit and listen to him; and I remember very well hearing a nightingale singing on a spray in a dewy hedge, and there were many small birds perched and mute and quiet near. The cock crows at midnight; and for miles around his kinsmen answer. The flower whistles his decoy for the wild duck to come. So certain rhymes and poems affected my mind when I was young, and continue to do so when I am old.⁶⁴

High standards of selection from traditional verse make Good Numbers (1903) an extremely challenging reading for older pupils. The editor's plea for their youthful

64. Walter de la Mare, Come Hither. (Illinois: The National Council for Teachers of English, 1963), p.18.

readers was that they begin with poems which would give them immediate pleasure and then go on to those which challenged highest powers.

Walter de la Mare was delighted in children as he found them. He loved chuckling with them at their whims and foibles. Poor Tired Tim is a favourite everywhere.... His confession of what poem was to be about, expresses the credo that poetry which was later to be written for children was not to inform or to instruct, but to entertain. It also deepened their insight into human personality and offered a new interest to the things of every day :

And all my song is meant to say
Is just what she did one long, long day
With her own little self to play with only
Yet never once felt the least bit lonely.⁶⁵

He was equally at home in the natural and the supernatural world. In imagination he led children into the 'land of Faerie' and opened their eyes and ears to the mystic realms of the spirit. Their delight in the beauty of his imagery and the lilt of his lines has given them a new appreciation of poetry at its best.

Bright is the ring of words
When the right man rings them,
Fair and fall of songs
When the singer sings them.

65. Walter de la Mare as quoted by Dora V. Smith, Fifty Years of Children's Books: 1910-1960. (Illinois: The National Council for Teachers of English, 1963), p. 18.

Still they are carolled and said -
 On wings they are carried
 After the singer is dead
 And the maker burried.

In fact, like fiction poetry is the life and breath of children. The enjoyment which they receive from it, is far-reaching and of many kinds.

Martial strains which fire the blood, fairy music ringing in the ears, half told tales which set the young heart dreaming, brave deeds, unhappy fates, sombre ballads keen joyous lyrics and small jewelled verses where every word shines like a polished gem - all these good things children know and love. It is useless to offer them mere rhymes and jingles; it is ungenerous to stint their young vigorous imaginations with obvious prattle, fitted dexterously to their understanding. In the matter of poetry a child's imagination outstrips his understanding; his emotions carry him far beyond the narrow reach of his intelligence. He has but one lesson to learn - the lesson of enjoyment.⁶⁶

The child is more easily persuaded to take pleasure in poetry through the tune of words, through his senses. It hardly matters if the meaning is implicit in the sound. Coleridge says :

'Poetry gives much pleasure when only generally, and not perfectly understood.'⁶⁷

Children respond to rhythm and sound from their earliest memories of chantings :

66. Lillian Smith, op.cit., p.98.

67. Ibid., p. 100.

Hickory, dickory, dock,
 The mouse ran up the clock,
 The clock struck one,
 The mouse ran down.
 Hickory, dickory, dock.

And it is to nursery rhymes such as these that Robert Lynd, in his "Introduction" to An Anthology to Modern Verse says that many children owe their 'first literary thrill'.

Like their unread ancestors, children respond to verse with every evidence of enjoyment and almost immediate participation. This response is precisely the response they make to the

other aural art - music - because poetry is like music. It tickles their ears with its tunefulness and rhythm, and promotes a joining-in-response, just as music does.⁶⁸

I have just heard a poem spoken with so delicate a sense of its rhythm, with so perfect a respect for its meaning that if I were a wise man and could persuade a few people to learn the art, I would never open a book of verse again.⁶⁹

Time of poetry - whether in classroom or elsewhere, should be a time to lift the young spirits and give them something to grow on, for poetry lovers do grow in grace and in reverence for life because

68. May Hill Arbuthnot, Anthology of Children's Literature, op.cit., p. LXiii.

69. William Butler Yeats, Ideas of Good and Evil (New York: Macmillan and Company, 1907), p.16.

Loveliness that dies, when I forget,
Comes alive when I remember.

And children love and remember poetry.

There are certain qualities in poetry that charm children. It ranges in variety, i.e., from a sheer nonsense of rhythmical words to sad and tender ballads. The musical quality attracts them and they like the exact, neat rhyming of

Georgie, Porgie, pudding and pie
Kissed the girls and made them cry.
When the boys came out to play
Georgie, Porgie ran away.

They enjoy the actions involved in the verses, e.g., falling down of Jack and Jill, running away of Miss Muffet, jumping of the cow over the moon, etc. The story element, which is offshoot of some of these actions with rapidity along with the swing of the rhythm, enhances the excitement and makes the children particularly pleased with it. Moreover, the sheer fun of the verses keeps them alive in the hearts of children, through the ages. Humpty Dumpty had a great fall, Peter, Peter pumpkin-eater, keeps his wife in a pumpkin shell, etc., with its absurdity gives relief to children, who are surrounded on all sides by adults telling them to 'do this' and 'not to do that'.

Poetry can be used to stimulate children to read for fun and enjoyment. After all

What is poetry ? Who knows?
 Not the rose, but the scent of the rose,
 Not the sky, but the light in the sky,
 Not the fly, but the gleam of the fly,
 Not the sea, but the sound of the sea,
 Not myself, but what makes me,
 See, hear and feel something that prose
 Cannot: and what it is, who knows ?⁷⁰

Encyclopaedia defines it as follows

Absolute poetry is the concrete and artistic
 expression of the human mind in emotional
 and rhythmical language.

Poetry according to Voltaire is, "the music of the soul,
 and above all, of great feeling souls", but to Samuel
 Johnson, "the essence of poetry is invention; such invention
 as , by producing something unexpected surprises and delights."
 And Emily Dickinson says,

"If I read a book and it makes my whole body so
 cold, no fire can ever warm me, I know that is
 poetry. If I feel physically as if the top of
 my head were taken off, I know that is poetry.
 These are the only ways I know it. Is there any
 other way ?"

According to Robert Frost :

"A living poem begins with a lump in the throat;
 a home-sickness, or a love-sickness. It is a
 reaching out toward expression to find fulfilment.
 A complete poem is one when an emotion has found
 its thought, and thought has found words."⁷¹

As per definitions cited above, poetry surprises,
 delights, it sings music, makes one feel intensely, it gives

70. Eleanor Farjeon as quoted by May Hill Arbuthnot in
Children and Books, op.cit., p.186.

71. Ibid., p.187.

an assertive thought in rhythmic words and may be a shiver-up the backbone. When this happens, one has enjoyed it, otherwise poetry has not happened to him at all; it has passed by. It holds true to children also. When poetry leaves them puzzled and confused, they have not tasted the nectar. If their eyes shine bright, if they laugh their hearts out, or if they suddenly become quiet, poetry has enveloped their minds and hearts - they are in it.

It is in this sense that the poetry stands apart from the prose. Coleridge once defined prose as "words in the best order", and poetry as "best words in the best order". But for Helen Parkhurst,

"The difference between prose and poetry is the difference between the speaking voice and the singing - two things qualitatively distinct and yet incapable of exact description. But though distinct, they comprehend a wide range of gradations that intervene between them.... Just as prose is the domain of speech and poetry that of song, so this place in between might be called the no-man's land where belong the freer forms of verse and more lyrical sorts of prose."⁷²

Poetry is the language of feelings, of emotions, and of imagination, and comes from the depths of the heart, whereas prose is the language of intellect, which emerges from the realities of life.

72. Helen Parkhurst in "Beauty : An Interpretation of Art and Imaginative Life". Ibid., p. 187.

Informative Literature

Children of this age group, apart from knowing and appreciating their environs, have learnt a variety of subjects covered by social and physical sciences. A lot of emphasis is being laid on the development of scientific attitudes in the coming generations. With this background modern writers of children's books have exploited this area by producing rich literature, giving valuable information on various inventions and discoveries and have provided exercises to stimulate the imagination of the child towards achieving more. Some of the writers have developed this theme into science fiction, which apart from being interesting, is rich in basic scientific facts. This area is very important and has been appreciably noticed by writers. Some literature in this category is descriptive giving how and by whom various discoveries and inventions were made. Some of this literature provides scientific facts, and motivates the reader towards developing the existing stage of knowledge into higher learning.

The books of knowledge are not those that want to encroach upon leisure, pretending to be able to teach anything without drudgery. There is no truth in that. There are things which cannot be learned without great pains; we must be resigned to it. I like books of knowledge when they are not just grammar or geometry poorly disguised; when they have tact and moderation; when instead of pouring out so

much material on a child's soul that it is crushed, they plant it in a seed that will develop from inside. I like them when they do not claim that knowledge can take place of everything else. I like them especially when they still form all the different kinds of knowledge - the most difficult and the most necessary - that of the human heart.⁷³

That is how Paul Hazard defines a book of knowledge.

Lillian Smith says that the difference between a book of knowledge and a story book is one of intention. But Meltzer differs. He says,

Lillian Smith is guilty of bearing in mind, only the finest writers of fiction, when she discusses children's literature, and thinking only of run-of-the-mill writers when she discusses information books. She compares the rare few - the best - in fiction with the hacks in the information She goes on to describe three ways of writing informational books for children; one is to present facts; second is to present and interpret facts and third is to do both and create literature at the same time.⁷⁴

Meltzer goes on to say that "the best writers of non-fiction put their hearts and minds into their work. Their concern is not only 'what' they have to say, but 'how' they say it." He can hardly accept the separation of the suggested ways of writing informative books for children for he comments

73. Paul Hazard, Books, Children and Men, op.cit., p.58.

74. Milton Meltzer, "Where do all the prizes go ? The Case of Non-fiction" in Cross Currents of Criticism, op.cit., p.52.

that it seems "as though quality were applied like a coat of paint."⁷⁵

A child's instinct to learn comes from his surroundings, his wanderings, his curiosity. He reads what interests him. But after a certain age, say after ten years of age, children read not solely to fan the flames of their imagination, but also to 'find out', 'to know' about the bewildering and exciting world in which they find themselves. There is so much for them to learn about, there is so much that fascinates them, and they are so keen to discover their moorings, that it is no wonder that their inquisitive and curious minds wish to understand the mysterious and unknown world around them. A book of knowledge or an informational book goes a long way to satisfy their insatiable desire to 'know'. This literature is also known as nonfiction.

People have varied opinions about it. According to Aiden Chambers, the very name 'nonfiction' is so

"curiously negative and off-putting.... while it has not been completely ignored it does get brushed off and pushed to the back...as though information books were socially inferior to the upper crust stuff we call literature...(the dozens of children's literature have narrowed its meaning to encompass only stories, poems, and plays)- the holy three.... We'd do better

75. Ibid., p.53.

by children and ourselves if we received its accepted definition to include all that is published...every book, no matter its content and purpose, deserves and demands the respect and treatment - the skill and care - of art."76

Margery Fisher constantly compares and evaluates, drawing upon her knowledge of the whole body of children's literature in her review journal Growing Point. Meltzer, while reviewing a children's book of information wants to ask "how will it be organized ?" for style in any art is both form and content: they are woven together.

Anyhow, accuracy of information, clarity of explanation and acceptable use of English language are essentials of an information book. But there are other factors too like scaling the information to the grasp of the reader, ability of the author to arouse interest in the subject and to have certain illustrations or diagrams to explain and illuminate the text, if the subject needs them.

Biographies

It is another form of informational literature. Biography is closely allied to history. It is only by reading the lives of distinguished personages, that we can most satisfactorily acquaint ourselves with much that is valuable in history. History is the essence of

76. Ibid., p.53.

innumerable biographies. But for a long time it was difficult to find any biographies for children that were not stereotyped, stuffed with facts and figures. As a result these were unpopular. Nowadays they are flooding the market and almost threatening to capture young readers so completely that they may not be left with any time or taste for any other kind of reading. Children are learning history in terms of men who made it.

A child's interest in history grows out of the stories the history tells him. To him history is about men and deeds they performed.... His vague wanderings about the past take on reality and his imagination stimulated by a sense of colour and fascination of those heroic characters who lived in times past.... Biography and history are so blended in children's books that they are inter-mingled in their minds as well - a biography being a story about a person who really existed and who has interest for them.⁷⁷

A child naturally likes to identify himself with characters of history and biography. Their lives stir his imagination and excite ambition. This kind of reading interest arouses his sympathy with and understanding of the whole drama of human existence. Biography used as history should have authenticity. It needs to be as accurate and authentic as research can make it. A biographer is not free to give his own opinions or to prevent an interpretation for which he may not have any evidence. The

77. Lillian Smith, op.cit., p.186.

deeds of his hero should speak for themselves. The writer has to maintain objectivity. And lastly the biography should be as scrupulously documented as history. Lytton Strachey's "Queen Victoria" is the best example in this respect. Every single incident and every other description is documented in footnotes — though this biography has a quality of fiction in it. But the biographies for children need not be documented. They may not even give a complete account of the person concerned. The biographers for the young feel that it is quite justified to cast known facts about an episode into imaginary dialogues and to interpret the thoughts of their characters. We find a good deal of this type of biographies. The pre-adolescent child loves action and biographies for him begin simply with heroes of action.

Life stories of great men and women provide a rich reading material for up and coming children of this age group. Every nation has produced personalities that have provided leadership and guidance to the society to shape its destinies. In countries like India, where ideal social way of behaviour is developed into religious philosophies, the lives of philosophers and saints have been written to provide ideals to the coming generations. In the modern times certain personalities have written their own lives

and provided material to the future generation for learning the ways and means that had made the author a great man.

May Hill Arbuthnot says :

If biography is to be judged as literature, it must also have a pleasing style. The prose must be beautiful to read and it must be appropriate to the subject matter and to the mood of the story.⁷⁸

Noah Porter classifies biographies as follows⁷⁹:

1. Biographies of incident and adventure, where the subjects are always heroes, and the life whether true or exaggerated is more or less romance. Here the conspicuous things are : the striking events and uncommon positions by which the life of the hero is distinguished, and the spirit, courage and skill with which he meets and overcomes them. Books of this sort are favourites with the young, especially with boys, e.g., General Francis Marion, Charles XII, Napoleon Bonaparte, etc.
2. Lives of great generals and captains have fascinated so many young readers with the thought of military or naval career, e.g., the story of Alexander of Macedon and Julius Caesar, Napoleon, and Wellington, etc.
3. Biographies of historical characters, who are often military heroes and whose career is of public interest which attracts the readers who require startling scenes and splendid actions, e.g.,

78. May Hill Arbuthnot, Children and Books, op.cit., p.513.

79. Noah Porter, Books and Reading (Scribner, 1871), pp. 195-215.

Alexander and the Caesars, Henry IV of France, and Henry VIII of England, the Queens of England down to Victoria, etc. The reading of kings and courts introduces to the imagination brilliant pageants, splendid dresses, thrones, crowns, gorgeous robes, etc.

4. Closely allied to these are great statesmen and political leaders, diplomats and orators, e.g., Pandit Nehru, Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan, Mahatma Gandhi, etc.
5. Lives of self-made men are almost universally attractive, fascinating and instructive for children of limited means who aspire to make something of their lives.
6. Lives of men devoted to science or letters, who reflect the sentiments of their times. They give to these sentiments a concrete and personal interest, e.g., Meghnad Saha, Sir Shanti Swaroop, Rabindra Nath Tagore, and Premchand.

Two rules may help the selection and judgment of biographies : the person whose life is being read had a marked and distinctive character and that this character be set forth with truthfulness and skill.

Comics and Picture Books

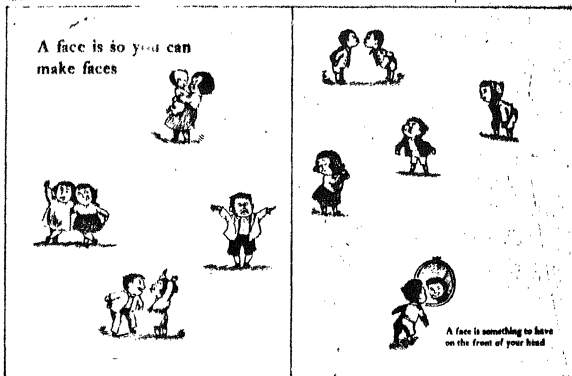
The latest trend in children's literature is picture-books commonly known as comics. These books try to provide a story - real or imaginary - in pictures with suitable captions and legends. Such literature provides limited reading material but covers a large area of knowledge.

After reading such a book, a child can develop the story and write its details in his own language.

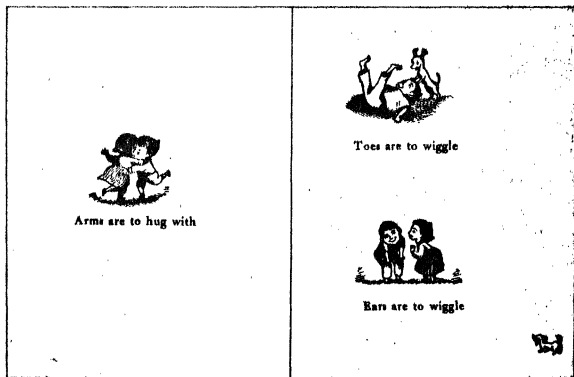
Though it is deplored by some as a waste of child's time, his eyesight and energy, when there is such a wealth of reading material available, it is very popular amongst children. Perhaps the easiest and most pleasant way of getting to know about children's literature, is to ask for picture story books at the library or at the shops. Sometimes these are called easy fiction, since they are materially different from other fiction, they are usually shelved separately. Picture books are those in which illustrations and text are so integrated, as to make an artistic whole. Some hold the opinion that they are the initial factors in bringing children to a love of reading, so immediate and certain is their appeal. Pappas says :

Not meant to 'teach' reading, they are not remedial readers of 'merely easy fiction'; the best of them are unique aesthetic experiences in art. It can be an invention to read a picture book aloud, simply and sympathetically to 'any' class in the primary school, and watch the reaction of the children to its utter simplicity and 'beauty of form and emotional effect', which is an Oxford Dictionary definition of literature.⁸⁰

80. George Pappas, Reading in the Primary School (North Sydney : Macmillan Company of Australia, 1970), pp. 194-195.



503, 504. *A Hole Is To Dig*, text by Ruth Krauss, pictures by Maurice Sendak. Harper, 1952. 5 x 6 1/2.



504

"Sendak's 'A Hole is to Dig' - a First Book of First Definitions and a novelty all around."*

*Barbara Bader. American Picture Books (New York; Macmillan & Co., 1976), p. 425.

30

DAME TROT AND



When the cloth was removed the Dame exclaimed! what a pity it is not to have something to drink, Miss Puss runs quickly for some wine, and soon returns with a bottle uncorked



But alas! Miss Puss took a glass herself, it soon got in her head; here she is dancing, capering, throwing somersets, and declaring she won't go to bed.

HER WONDERFUL CAT.

31



But all things have an end; and see, the sun over, they have all sunk into a sound and peaceful slumber, excepting that the old lady snores rather loud



Early next morning, Miss Puss awakened the Dame! who found breakfast all ready, and Miss Puss ready to do the honours of the table.

(continued on next page)

"A color illustrated paper bound book with two stories. The first presents a mischievous monkey whose attempts to dupe a cat cause a series of catastrophes. The second about a remarkable playful cat; bears a resemblance to the 1806 text about 'Dame Trot and her Comical Cat'. The volume serves as an example of many picture books with Nursery humor which were available in America in the latter half of the nineteenth century."*

*"The adventures of Miss Mintee & Master Jocko" (N.Y. Huestis & Cozans) as appeared in Yankee Doodles Literary Sampler of Prose, Poetry & Pictures by Virginia Haviland et al. (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1974), p. 153.

THE LITTLE FROG AND PRETTY MOUSE. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1862. 15 pages, 19 cm.

This is one of many toybooks produced by this publisher. The hand-colored drawings accompanying the doggerel rhymes have great spirit, as the example here indicates.



THE FROG AND MOUSE.

Mousey, as bashful as a young
miss,

Retir'd from Froggy's view,
But peeped at him from out
her hole,

As Froggy nearer drew.

Froggy approached and doffed
his hat,
Then, bending on his knee,
Said—Fairest Mouse, pray lis-
ten to

My tale of love for thee.

Virginia Haviland et.al., op.cit., p.161.

Dora V. Smith comments :

It is the picture story book which maintains the child's interest in reading during the difficult period of learning to read.⁸¹

Throughout the last ten years, the freshness, the originality, the unbelievable variety in theme, in text, and in illustrations — represented by this new form has revolutionalized writing for children. It seems that the popularity of comics and picture books is due to the ease with which these can be read. Then there is a receiving pattern of theme in many of them and, lastly, because it does not require deep thinking.

The names of Beatrix Potter with The Tale of Peter Rabbit, Wanda Gag with Millions of Cats, Kate Greenaway with An Apple Pie, and Leslie Brook with The Story of the Three Little Pigs, and The Story of the Three Bears, and Dr. Seuss with The 500 Hats of Bartholomew Cubbins have become immortal in the world of picture books for children. In India also a great interest is being taken by publishers in bringing out picture books for children, but with limited resources, with commercial interests of the publishers, and with

81. Dora V. Smith, op.cit., p. 93.

not many good artists available, the efforts have failed to achieve its aim.

Anne Carrol Moore pleads the case for picture books in this way :

First impression of pictures, rhymes and stories are both enduring and elusive.... Here to my mind, is the normal beginning of any appreciation of art and that of folk-feeling for other countries which fires the imagination. No country will seem entirely strange whose picture books have been familiar to us from childhood.... Fine picture books exert a far more subtle influence in the formation of reading tastes, and habits than it is possible to estimate for their integrity is unshakable.⁸²

Barbara Badar has defined the picture book as

...a text, illustration, total design, an item of manufacture and a commercial product; a social, cultural, historical document; and foremost, an experience for a child. As an art form it hinges on the independence of pictures and words. On the simultaneous display of two facing pages and the drama of the turning of the page. On its own terms its possibilities are limited.⁸³

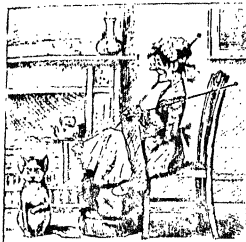
The Cat Episode, "Our Cat Eats Rat Poison" by A.B.

Frost (Harpers Magazine, LXIII, July 1881, p. 320), reprinted, extended, and altered in Stuff and Nonsense, Scribner, 1884), is Frost's master work of explosive articulation.

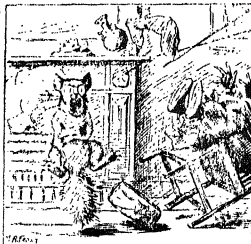
82. Anne Carroll Moore, The Three Owls (New York : Macmillan, 1925), p. 70.

83. Barbara Badar, American Picture Books: From Noah's Ark to The Beast Within, (New York: Macmillan, 1976), p.1.

OUR CAT EATS RAT POISON—A TRAGEDY IN FIVE ACTS AND ONE TABLEAU.



ACT 1.—SUSPICION.



ACT 2.—THE PANG.



ACT 3.—THE FLIGHT THROUGH THE HALL.



ACT 4.—STARTLED ONES.



ACT 5.—THE BEGINNING OF THE END.



CURTAIN—REQUIESCAT IN PACE.

A.B.Frost 'Our Cat Eats Rat Poison'. "Harper's Magazine" LXIII (July 1981) p.320, as appeared in American Picture Books by Barbara Bader, op.cit., p.9.

One can watch the expression in its eyes, as depicted here in number one, when it discovers the character of food. The wondering look on its face and the slow movement of its paws across the stomach can be noted clearly. What is there to give such full and complete expression to it ? Only a dot and a line, and yet there is a whole volume of anxiety, alarm, misery, and fright, written all over it, everything expressed in the same dot and line. What is more, where the vocabulary is too difficult the colour strips are in plenty, comics and picture books may actually become a disincentive to children with reading difficulties because they tend to guess the story from the illustrations; some gain sufficient satisfaction from doing so, and may feel that there is no pressing need to the written word at all in communication. In contrast, they find the strain of coping with continuous print, even for a short while, too arduous to make them want to struggle through, particularly when they are achieving minimal success.

But inspite of all said and done, children do love simple fun and fantasy of cartoons and if someone, may be the teacher, is willing to prepare her own scheme using controlled vocabulary based on well loved comics, there is a fair chance of achieving success with children who have not responded successfully with other methods. But there

are difficulties of all sorts. If the reading level is right, the book may be too long to hold their attention and interest, or the story may be complex, or else, if the book is the right length, then many a time the interest level may be low. If properly prepared, children devour them and, in doing so, begin to enjoy the 'feel' of a book at a critical stage in their development.

What has been established is the picture book itself as "the simplest, the subtlest, most communicative, most elusive, most challenging book form of all."⁸⁴

And regardless of what occurs elsewhere, a single individual with creative vision - an editor, a writer, an artist - can make all the difference.⁸⁵

There is a big variety of books in English awaiting to be picked up, to be wrapped in beautiful gift papers and handed over to the children of all ages and stages. There are books with expression of simplest joys of life as experienced by the simplest beings - the children themselves. They can enjoy the warmth of sun shine, the

84. William R. Scott in "Some Notes on Communication in Picture Books, Elementary English, XXXIV, Feb., 1957, p. 72.

85. Barbara Badar, op.cit., p. 572.

gurgling sound of running water, the shadowed trees, the chirping of the birds, the dusty roads, the winter fire side - every thing that nature has to offer through these books. They can enjoy, and laugh and cry with characters of the stories. But there is a big 'BUT' there. What does it read like ? Well, it reads : 'But... is all this material suited to the needs of Indian children ?'

The answer to this question lies in literary criticism of children's books which is still in its infancy in the Western world, and in India it has yet to come to life. Many people see no need for the criticism of children's literature, since for them criticism is mostly explication, and according to them children's literature is too simple to demand it.

While reviewing and selecting books for both boys and girls, Caroline M. Hewins reflects :

No college English, no finishing school course in art or literature will ever give men or women what they might have had if books had been as much their friends in childhood, as children next door.⁸⁶

The relationship between the child and the book can only be established if one knows the needs of children at various levels, the demands they make on authors, the varied

86. Caroline M. Hewins, Books for Boys and Girls, (Chicago: American Library Association, 1915), p.6.

interests they have and the capacity to which they can assimilate the matter. One should be able to think in terms of 'Why', 'What' and 'how much' will really be useful for them. Children need to learn to read with a certain degree of deference and docility to an author. Mrs. Browning has said :

We get no good
By being ungenerous even to a book
And calculating profits, so much help
By so much reading. It is rather when
We gloriously forget ourselves and plunge
Soul forward, head long into a book's profound,
Impassioned for its beauty and salt of truth
'Tis then we get the right good from a book.⁸⁷

Parents prefer to pay high prices for gaudy, poorly designed and badly constructed toys for their children than to take pains and select a good book and pay its price. But the child remains dissatisfied and almost intellectually hungry. The 'Noon' comes 'to dine', and with 'trembling hands' he draws 'the Table near', and touches 'the Curious Wine' of literature. He does not recognise the 'ample Bread' because it is 'so unlike the Crumb' he has so far lived on. He is disappointed and with a deep sigh he murmurs :

I had been hungry all the years
The plenty hurt me - 'twas so new -
Myself felt ill - and odd
As Berry - of a mountain Bush
Transplanted - to the Road.⁸⁸

87. Mrs. Browning as quoted by Noah Potter, op.cit., p.52.

88. Emily Dickinson "I had been hungry all the years", The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson edited by Thomas H. Johnson, (Boston: Little Brown & Company, 1960), p.283.

CHAPTER IV

PROJECTION OF VALUES

Jean Karl, while speaking of children's books, remarked that the truly excellent book, whether fact or fiction, is

an experience transformed by wisdom of the author into his understanding of a part of the world as he sees it. It is not a photographing of incidents. It is re-arranging of incidents, keeping their accuracy, but translating them into a means of conveying a deeper truth....¹

Here the word worth noticing is 'conveying' - it is not 'preaching', it is not 'teaching' - it is simply 'conveying'. Such a book, if there is any, does not set out to teach, and it certainly does not preach; it may then, seem to have no purpose at all except to provide entertainment and enjoyment. But at the same time, if it is truly and really 'excellent', has it not done something far more valuable than simply teach or build a character, which some people think is all that a children's book should do? If it has expanded a reader's mind and his power of

1. Jean Karl. "A Children's Editor Looks at Excellence in Children's Literature" in The Horn Book Magazine, XLIII;1: February 1967, p. 32.

imagination a little, if it has added to the total bulk of his experience and provided him with a wider base from which to look at the world, it has perhaps, become a part of him as the 'moor' was a part of Emile Dickinson.

Jean Karl adds a point by saying :

Any book of excellence is like a seed. No matter how small it is, it is capable of growing in the mind of the right reader into a whole new world. Real excellence comes from an author who is willing to give something of himself, and who has something to give.²

One may wonder if this didactic spirit which is regarded almost as a synonym to children's literature really deserves to be there. True, during the nineteenth century it was taken for granted that the children's book had a didactic aim, but with the emergence of books like Alice in Wonderland, Treasure Island, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn and The Adventures of Tom Sawyer it began to break down. Mark Twain said in the beginning of The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn :

NOTICE

"Persons attempting to find a motive in this narrative will be prosecuted; persons attempting to find a moral in it will be banished; persons attempting to find a plot in it will be shot."

By the order of the author.....

2. Ibid., pp.32-33.

But then one asks with Townsend whether this didactic spirit is really extinct in children's literature today ? We tend to write and talk as though it were ! Yet, the urge to instruct the young is deeply built into human nature. Townsend goes on to say :

And if one looks at the quality children's books of today and still more at what is written about them, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that didacticism is still very much alive and that by an engaging intellectual frailty we are able to reject the concept while accepting the reality.³

Children's literature performs a great service in moral education of children. It is responsible for shaping the social, ethical ideas. Literature produced in different languages of the world, conveys philosophies and values based on past experiences and is motivated by possible future concepts. An author, within the limited scope of a book for children may not be able to cover this 'moral education' in detail, but he does want to convey a point and to give a message. Thus, mostly these books are written with a specific object to develop social and moral values.

The main purpose of these books, apart from the academic growth, is to develop the personality of a child in accordance with the norms of society. The author,

3. John Rowe Townsend, "Didacticism in Modern Dress", The Horn Book Magazine, XLIII:2: April 1967, p.159.

therefore, uses a variety of themes and styles to propound social philosophies in a manner that the child is impressed to develop pride in his heritage, to appreciate social, moral, religious and other institutions of the society, and to recognise and respect the values for which these institutions stand. Children's literature, though not categorised, thus aims to serve the same purpose which the religious, moral or anthropological writings do.

The social values differ from one society to the other. They are based on cultural heritage, religion and philosophy, social surroundings, economic conditions and so many other factors which are generally not common in all the societies. It is therefore, natural that children's literature written in India, England and America should emphasize different values, through certain common and universal factors like respect for elders and teachers, good relations with neighbours, hygienic living, personal cleanliness etc. may also appear to have been expressed in a different way by Indian and Western authors. Respect to elders in India is an off-shoot of the family system of a patriarchal society, and is therefore in-built in the child whereas such respect has to be built in a Western child. The teacher in India, from time immemorial, has been considered as next to father to whom the child was entrusted after the 'Upnayana Samskar' - and inspite of the Western impact on Indian education, the type of respect for the

teacher in India continues to be reverential. The Western approach in this respect is quite different.

If some one carefully goes through the children's literature produced in different countries, he would have a fascinating and enlightening experience - fascinating just to read what millions of Indian, Russian, Japanese, Turkish, Australian, English or American children are reading today when they go to school or when they have developed the ability to read on their own; and enlightening to discover that the stories, while similar in many respects, differ markedly from country to country in the values they express, and project.

Stories from the Middle Eastern and North African countries like Turkey, Lebanon and Tunisia, quite often are built around a theme of cleverness or ability to outwit somebody else. In Turkey the idea is presented in a form which stresses the triumph of cleverness and the dangers of being out-witted. Many stories from the Middle East too stress the same point.

Other countries, of course stress values in their stories which unlike cleverness, would be more highly approved by American, Indian or British parents and teachers. In Japanese stories great emphasis is placed on the importance of being kind and obliging to others whereas in German stories the emphasis is on the value of loyalty.

The conclusion is obvious: that popular stories for children reflect what the people in the country value most, what they think is important, and what they want their children to know. David Mc Clelland quotes Russel:

In literature children and adolescents can find many of man's most important social, ethical ideas.

He goes on to discuss the importance of stimulating children to discover such ideas for themselves in the stories they read. He further observes that the values described

in the lovely words of our language such as truth, justice, loyalty and faith... are puzzling and difficult for adults, and even more for children, and yet they are the foundations of our society.⁴

He goes on to comment :

I believe that the children acquire the values or ethical ideas expressed in the stories, even without conscious and deliberate attempts to abstract them. It is the abstraction process which is difficult, not the ideas themselves. I believe that Middle Eastern children learn naturally and easily from what they read that cleverness is a good thing just as American children learn that working together is the best way of doing things. Children come to take such ideas for granted because that's the way things 'are' or 'happen' in the stories they read.⁵

In the same way Indian children also learn that they are the members of a large family, and they owe responsibilities

4. David Russel as quoted by David C. Mc Clelland in "Values in Popular Literature for Children, Childhood Education, 40: November 1963, p.136.

5. Ibid., p.

towards all of them - whether it is their uncle, father, mother, aunt or one of the cousins, who happens to live with them. Not only this, an Indian child, who lives in a village, considers all the villagers as the members of his own family. He addresses them as 'Dada', 'Kaka', 'Bhaiya', 'Chacha' and so on. He also learns to regard his cow as next to his mother. Prem Chand's famous story Heera Moti is an example of this love even for the animals. His novel Godan is only a story which tells the tale of human heart as well as that of love and affection of Hori for his cow. There are thousands of such examples in literature.

In the early years John Bunyan (1688) started his Book for Boys and Girls by saying :

To those who are in the years
My pen to teach them what the letters be
And how they may improve their A B C.⁶

At that time children were treated not as under-developed beings, but as ignorant men and women, and nothing was written especially for the needs of immature minds. Instead, the little ones were expected to digest the heavy literary diet given to them by the adults. After almost a lap of eight years Isaac Watts wrote in reference to his

6. John Bunyan, quoted in Alice M Earle's "Child Life in Colonial Days", (p.117), as referred to by Monica Keifer. American Children Through Their Books, (Philadelphia : University of Pennsylvania Press, 1948), p.7.

Divine Songs for the Use of Children :

Some of my friends imagine that my time is employed in too mean a service while I wrote for babes.⁷

John Locke once said, "engage the liking of children and tempt them to read."⁸ And children have not hesitated in adopting literature of the adult's world for their exclusive use, e.g. Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress (1688), Daniel Defoe's Robinson Crusoe (1714), and Jonathan Swift's Gulliver's Travels (1726) etc. Locke had not only recommended the use of picture books as an aid to study, but had also endorsed such works as Aesop's Fables as desirable reading for children. He thought that these fables could be as useful for an adult as they are for children because they conveyed morals and values which one could cherish all his life. He declared that the fables which were

apt to delight and entertain a child may yet afford useful reflections to a grown man; and if his memory retains them all his life after, he will not repent to find them there amongst his manly thoughts and serious business.⁹

Later the theory of Jean Jaques Rousseau that the chief aim of education was to develop the child according to

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7. Isaac Watts as quoted in Algernon Tassin's "Books for Children", Ibid, p.7.
 8. John Locke, as quoted by Charles Welsh in "Early History of Children's Books in New England", New England Magazine, XX, 147, Ibid., p.7.
 9. John Locke, Ibid., p.12.

the laws of nature

manifested itself toward the close of the eighteenth century in a new impetus given to child study. As a result the Juvenile literature came under the control of didactic school of writers. Most writers of children's literature became theorists who sought to make life fit for their theories.¹⁰

There were 'Holy Sentences' to be taught to the students: e.g.

A woman is always wavering and inconstant,
Our father's manners are not to be found fault
withal, but endured,
A loiterer gets neither Honour nor Riches,
Pursue learning which adorns prosperity, etc.¹¹

Juvenile poetry produced by the English school of moralists and reprinted in America at the turn of the century reveals the low opinion many writers had of the child's capacity to appreciate finer things. William Roscoe inspired a host of imitations by writing a sprightly poem The Butterfly's Ball and Grasshopper's Feast for his little son's birthday in 1807. This tiny classic in which child's imagination plays with the life of world, began:¹²

Come, take up your Hats and let us haste
To the Butterfly's Ball and the Grasshopper's Feast.

Children in the company of other guests such as frog, the squirrel and the dragon fly could easily enjoy the hospitality

10. Florence V. Barry in "A Century of Children's Books", Ibid., p.17.

11. A.T.C. Books, pp. 120-121.

12. A.S.W. Rosenbach in "Early American Children's Books", as quoted by Monica Keifer, p. 23.

of the Land of Make Believe, where they found fairy like preparations for the feast :

A mushroom their table, and on it was laid
A water dock leaf, which a table cloth made.¹³

Not only this, there were poems like Notorious Glutton for children to learn their lessons :

A duck who had such a habit of stuffing,
That all day long she was panting and puffing.

.....

The doctor to his business proceeding
By gentle emetics, a blister and bleeding,
When all on a sudden she roll'd on her side.
Gave a horrible quackle, a struggle, and died.
Her remains were inter'd in a neighbouring swamp
By her friends, with a great deal of funeral pomp
But I've heard this inscription her tomb was put on
'Here lies Mrs. Duck, the Notorious Glutton';
And all the young ducklings are brought by their friends
To learn the disgrace in which the gluttony ends.¹⁴

If one goes through alphabet lessons of early ages one would come across certain very interesting things which depict the attitudes of people towards children at that time,¹⁵ e.g.,

F; Foolishness is bound up in the
Heart of a child but the rod of
Correction shall drive it from him

With the growth of the secular spirit of education the 'primer' of 1800 (in West) had lost some of its priestic

13. Monica Keifer, p. 23.

14. Ibid., p.170.

15. "Alphabet Lesson for Youth", Ibid., p.144.

tone. The alphabet of that year read in part :

A: was an Angler and finished with hook
 B: was a blockhead and n'er learned his book
 C: the Cat doth play and after slay.

There is another one from Tom Thumb's picture alphabet :

A: is an angler, young but expert
 B: is a butcher, who wears a red shirt

 I: is an Ice boat propelled by steam
 J: is a Jocky who drives a gay team

 O: is the farmer's ox that is fattened for beef
 P: is the parson whose sermons are brief, and so on.

But subsequently the normal child with his faults and virtues was to become the hero of juvenile literature. Normally by participating in social life around him, he picks up the ideas which he has to learn. Kriges have said:

General behaviour, attitudes and values are not taught by any formal training. These are inextricably bound up with life in the society and become unconsciously adopted by any one fully partaking in social life. Even a European when speaking the language and trying to enter into their social activities finds himself unconsciously taking for granted values that he never had before and which are certainly not to be found in European life. They seem to follow naturally from the social situation and to be bound up with language itself.¹⁶

What counts in education is attitude expressed in skills. The attitudes that count are known. In fact the

16. E.J. Krige and J.D. Krige. The Realm of Rain Queen. (London: Oxford University Press for International African Institute, 1943), pp. 109-110.

teachers are tired of learning about them again and again in every conference or seminar. As one teacher puts it :

I already know what a child needs. I know it by heart. He needs to be accepted, respected, liked and trusted, encouraged, supported, activated and amused; able to explore, experiment and achieve. Damn it! He needs too much. All I lack is Solomon's wisdom, Freud's insight, Einstein's knowledge and Florence Nightingale's dedication.¹⁷

The values of life can best be taught by leaving the children to interpret them from the books they happen to read. There is no need for moral preaching, no need for didacticism and no need to under-estimate their capacities for learning them indirectly. If left to themselves, children will gather more than what they would by spoon-feeding.

In content, as in intent, children's literature has represented both hopes and fears of its time - though the fears were almost always more evident than the optimism. The writers, in making choice of what to praise and what to blame, have given clues to their responses towards the changing society. They have, like any adult, approved obedience, submissiveness, kindness and charity. They have shown their beliefs in settled virtues of home and family. Macleod¹⁸ says that they preferred

17. Haim Ginott. Teacher and the Child. (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1972), p. 38.

18. Anne Scott Macleod. A Moral Tale. (Connecticut: Archon Books, 1975), pp. 147-148.

order and utility over creativeness and intellectuality and safety over adventurousness. Generally speaking, they lauded the past more than the present.

Above all, she further says :

The stories they wrote were suffused with a desire of moral certainty which entirely superseded any other considerations. These stories sacrificed any sense of complexity of their age in order to preserve what they condemned.

Selfishness was the primary sin in children's fiction, and its bad name covered a variety of faults. Ambition was deplored and also every form of aggressive self will.

The gradual changes towards the end of the period carry their own message. The gap between the ideal and the real widened and the efforts of the new generations of writers to bridge the gap became very obvious and conspicuous. The values propounded by the authors of later generation were not different from those of the earlier writers. Both believed in the reality of good as well as evil. Every author of children's fiction wrote plays of morality. Hawthorne once commented :

Where is our universe? All crumbled away from us; and we adrift in chaos, may hearken to the gusts of homeless wind that go sighing and murmuring about, in quest of what was once a world.¹⁹

19. Nathaniel Hawthorne, House of Seven Gables, (Boston: Ticknor Reed and Fields, 1851), p.259.

That children's books can have a tremendous effect on the minds of young children, can best be judged by the popularity one of the best sellers in German children's literature, Struwwelpeter, written by Heinrich Hoffmann, gained and the controversy that followed it. It is a short collection of illustrated verses which achieved unprecedented popularity almost immediately after its publication in 1844. Hoffmann had written it for his own child being thoroughly disgusted with the available material. He believed children to be more responsive to simple visual presentations than to verbal exhortations. He was a private physician and as per his own account he had sketched little episodes in Struwwelpeter to distract and 'comfort' the frightened young children whom he treated. There goes The Story of a Thumbsucker :

Mommy leaves: Is Conard disconcerted ?
 Not at all. Slurp-whoop the thumb's inserted
 Bang goes the door
 And then before
 Conard can run away
 The tailor comes, and cuts, and cuts.
 The thumbs have gone - they don't stay....

There is another one The Sad Story of the Matches, where Paulina, the little girl is burnt alive because she plays with matches, and the result is:

Every thing is burned away
 The little child: her skin, her hair,
 We cannot find them any where
 A pile of ash is all that's there....

Once again we land up with the moral behind the story. Hurlimann found that the story of Paulina is justified, though Freeman finds no justification for such poems as suitable reading material for children.²⁰ Many German critics like Dyhernfurth believe that these severe punishments are satisfying to the child's desire for justice, though they are disproportionate to the crimes. However, Freeman concludes :

The book may be potentially harmful to children, but its effect really depends on the whole context in which a child grows up. Fairy tales also attempt to shape children's character and they also contain a certain amount of violence - but instead of making them guilty, fairy tales are often symbolic representations of the psychological growth which children of various ages are able to grasp semiconsciously or unconsciously. They offer to children a vehicle for fantasizing about their problems, for venting their hostilities.²¹

During recent years there has been a rage in literature rage against lies and the paradoxes in education. There are contradictions e.g. we wish to teach children the virtues of tolerance, while we insist on an imposed party line. We wish to teach them to respect themselves while we ourselves do not respect children and so on. It has provoked a literature of rage, a gaggle of angry and often inspired

20. Thomas Freeman, "Heinrich Hoffmann's 'Struwwelpeter' : An Inquiry into the Effects of Violence in Children's Literature", Journal of Popular Culture, X- 4, Spring 1977, p. 810.

21. Ibid., p. 817.

books describing how schools really cheat children. The idea behind this kind of writing is the belief that children should be left to themselves to find out about the realities and facts of life. They should be respected as 'individuals', as important and as precious as any adult. The child is as human as any group of persons. He is certainly not a 'miniature' adult. He has the individuality, a personality of his own.

There are evidences in literature that express this anger of authors towards the paradoxical systems in education e.g. Bel Kaufman in Up the Down Staircase, Kazol in Death at an Early Age, Jim Haskin in Diary of a Harlem School Teacher, Claude Brown in some parts of Man Child in a Promised Land, and John Holt in How Children Fail have expressed this anger.²² These critics are called 'romantics'. They are romantics in the same way as Rousseau and Forebell, because they too believe in innate goodness of children. They hold the view that children are not small adults, but children.

Theodore R.Sizer maintains that the ends of education are development of power, sense of agency and joy. He feels that the maximum use of the child's intellectual and physical facilities should be made to achieve his person and corporate

22. Theodore Sizer. Places for Learning, Places for Joy (Cambridge : Harvard University Press, 1973), pp.61-63.

ends: he should be able to develop his personal style, assurance and self control that allow him to act in both socially acceptable and personally meaningful ways. And lastly, education should enable a child to taste the fruits of aesthetic discipline, of faith, of commitment towards society.

Children can be lured into learning. They can even be tempted and hooked on to it, but they cannot be shamed into it. When forced to study, children use their ingenuity to get through school without learning. And we do not want this to happen. It is a difficult path, but "unlike ships human relations fonder on pebbles, not reef."²³ Very often the teachers get worried and upset when children do not take interest in reading, and they tend to ask the psychologists how to motivate them to learn. The answer is simple, i.e. "to make it safe for them to risk failure".²⁴ The major obstacle to learning is fear: fear of failure, of criticism, of appearing stupid. But an earnest and effective teacher tries to remove this fear and welcome mistakes, in order to get them rectified, to invite them to attempt, and thus, to encourage learning. In the same way an author motivates the child to read by presenting to him the reading material which tallies with his interests, which captures his

23. Haim Ginott, op.cit., p.148.

24. Ibid., p.242.

attention and which satisfies his needs; but which does not necessarily intend to 'teach' him. It simply motivates him to read. Ginott's views on such motivation can be summed up through the following tale :

A fire broke out in a cramped office. The firemen who rushed to rescue found a man heavily asleep. They tried to carry him down the stairs, but could not, and they despaired of saving him. Then the Chief arrived and said, 'Wake him up and he will save himself....'

Children who are bored with the dullness of textbooks will not be affected by a well intentioned rescuer - the teacher, the parent or the author. They need to be awakened to their potential, they have to be made conscious of the danger of void created by being disinterested in reading books other than textbooks, and they will save themselves.

Those who teach know by experience, and those who read the reports of the educational testing programmes know second hand that imparting knowledge and developing child's interest in reading is no simple task. But the schools and the teachers are well equipped with the kinds of curricula, all sorts of materials to make the learning easier - and more palatable.

They are guided by some core of accepted principles proved in the long history of pedagogy and psychology. Contrast the circumstances for teaching and learning values. Here too there is a large relevant literature based in writings from mortal philosophy, enlarged by works on

moral and character education and psychological studies.²⁵

But when crucial problems arise, philosophies of 'dos' and 'don'ts' often disappear. The philosophy is left with no meaning. There is a story told about a philosopher who was crossing a big river in a small boat. He asked the boatman, "Do you know philosophy?" "I can't say, I do", answered the man. "Then you have lost one third of your life", said the philosopher. "Do you know any literature?" He persisted. "Well, I can't say, I do", answered the boatman again. "Oh! then you have lost two thirds of your life", said the philosopher. Just then the boat hit a rock, and started sinking. "Do you know how to swim?" asked the boatman. "No", replied the philosopher. "Then, I am sorry to tell you that you have lost whole of your life", said the boatman.

In other words; one may agree with Martin Buber that

time is granted to the child to exchange a spiritual connection with the world he gradually loses... but he does not possess it yet; he must first draw it truly out, he must make it into a reality for himself, he must find for himself his own world by seeing and hearing and touching and shaping it. Creation reveals in meeting its essential nature as form.²⁶

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25. Herbert Hyman and Charles R. Wright. Education's Lasting Influence on Values, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 39.
26. Martin Buber in "I and Thou", as quoted by Daniel Cheifetz, Theatre in My Head, (Toronto: Little Brown and Company, 1971), p.1.

There is a need for self discipline and according
to Danial Cheifetz,

a game is the thing to get children involved in
a new activity. Playing the game by rules is
self disciplining...seeing one another doing
interesting things is a good way to satisfy
their curiosity about each other.²⁷

West had its impact on Indian way of living due to
the British rule in India and due to the educational system
adopted during that time. Many Indians started going to
England for higher studies and were exposed to the British
society and their way of living. As long back as 1858
Hunter Commission was appointed to investigate and make
recommendations regarding the changes to be adopted in
the educational system, if necessary. After the independence
India also came in contact with many other countries due to
social, cultural and political exchanges e.g. exchange of
scholars encouraged Indian students going abroad and vice-
versa; commercial exchanges encouraged businessmen to go
there and as such they too were exposed to a different kind
of living. With impact of West on the educational system in
India, children's attitudes and values also changed and
certain new ideas filtered into the Indian culture. The
Western values have seeped into our own system and as a
result the texture of society and social structure is
undergoing a change - a dynamic change, pushing the ancient
culture in the background.

27. Ibid., p.7.

An analysis of over three hundred books to find out the values propagated therein shows :

<u>S.No.</u>	<u>Values</u>	<u>No. of books</u>
1.	Presence of mind, resourcefulness, courage, wisdom and reasoning	34
2.	Sense of duty	25
3.	Social awareness	22
4.	Love	22
5.	Co-operation	18
6.	Adventure	17
7.	Determination	16
8.	Friendship and personal relationship	16
9.	Honesty	15
10.	Sacrifice	14
11.	Kindness	14
12.	Humour	13
13.	Truthfulness	12
14.	Compassion	11
15.	Respect for others	11
16.	Endurance	11
17.	Enterprise	10
18.	Dignity of Labour	9
19.	Mercy	8
20.	Good Manners	8
21.	Civic sense	7
22.	Discipline	6
23.	Democracy and socialism: a way of life	4

24.	Cleanliness	3
25.	Tolerance	3
26.	Dynamism	3
27.	Sportsmanship	3
28.	Patriotism	3
29.	Equality	1
30.	Freedom	1
Total :		<u>340</u>

All the values expressed in the above books are at the very least, characteristic of the Indian way of life, and at best, try to encourage children for achieving these ends. Some of the values that were stressed are :

- Money may be the measure of success in material world, but one should be generous in handling it, as this is not an end in itself.
- If every one tries to do his best, competition is bound to be there, but one must try to play fair. He, who tries to play fair, wins through in the end, though he may seem to be losing in the beginning.
- Evil contains the seeds of its own punishment and destruction.
- Children should be tolerant and should work together to accomplish their goals.
- One must regard and give due respect to his elders and gain their blessings to make their own lives happy.

- Some people may get lucky breaks in life, but ultimately it is the hard work that pays and makes the person win... and so on.

No wonder, values are important and need to be projected, but they have to be instilled and filtered through in a way that they do not become sermons or moral preachings as such. Literature, by virtue of being imaginative, is capable of rendering this work and it is upto the author to do it successfully for children. According to Noah Porter

The ground of moral exposure is not the fact that evil is painted, nor that it is painted boldly; but it is in the manner in which it is represented - whether with fidelity to the ordinance of nature, or falsely to her eternal laws as written on the heart of man.²⁸

The imagination forms and controls the conscience so far as it forms and enforces the ideals of what we can and ought to become. The ideals which it forms and enforces must inevitably raise us upward or drag us downward. Literature, in all its products and forms as history, essay, story etc. modifies these ideals, and has a lasting influence which is especially subtle and effective when this imaginative element gives character and name to the product, i.e. when as a poem, novel or drama, it stimulates and directly addresses the controlling power. It follows

28. Noah Porter. Books and Reading (New York: Scribner, 1871), p. 82.

that all those ethical criteria and rules by which we estimate or judge the imaginative writers, apply to each and every department of literature.

There is quite a good amount of writing which may be classified as cheap literature, if it deserves to be called literature stall. Of many of these productions nothing worse can be said, than that they are 'utterly frivolous', that they

while away the time and interest the feelings, but neither elevate the tastes nor brighten the life... They are made to 'take' and made to 'sell'; and they both 'take' and 'sell' because they humour what their readers like in respect to characters, incidents, illustrations and style.²⁹

It is a relief to turn from this painful picture to a higher and better kind of popular literature which we believe to be gaining a surer hold and widening influence. While with one class of readers there is a certain degradation, as there must be with forces so active as to carry them downwards, with another, there is a steady and progressive elevation as there are books to foster such an improvement.

Such are the histories which 'attract' and 'instruct'; the biographies which 'leave a glow in the minds of children'; the poetry that is 'popular and elevating'; the criticism that 'discerns undiscovered beauties' in their favourite

29. Ibid., pp.97-98.

authors; the travels that almost reconcile them to the necessity that 'forbids them to wander', and the tales that 'sparkle without corrupting' and that 'let them laugh and still be wise'....³⁰

Literature, thus, has a lasting influence on the minds of the young readers. A few pages of a single volume which a child comes across during his leisure hours may fascinate him and attract his attention; may charm and hold his mind, and the result could be that he becomes a sailor later on and gets wedded to sea for his life. No force or influence can undo the work begun by those pages, no love of parents or other relations, no temptations of money or honour, no fear of suffering or disgrace is a match for the enchantment conjured up and sustained by that exciting volume which he read as a child.

TheodoreSizer maintained that

General expectations notwithstanding, there is no such thing as a value free school. Schools have to take moral positions just to operate. They have to treat children in one way or another, and thus willy-nilly teach a set of norms by example.³¹

The children need to be motivated to read and to learn. But this has to be done tactfully. The term 'motivation' according to Donald Smith,

in its simplest sense may be translated as 'what we pay attention to'. The purposeful motivation

30. Ibid., pp.99-100.

31. TheodoreSizer, op.cit., p.71.

to produce achieving children may be called the control of attention. The teacher's task with regard to motivation is to arrange conditions so that children come under the control of (i.e. pay attention to) instructional arrays.³²

All this holds true to the writers also because they are responsible for producing literature for children whose minds are bound to be affected by what they read. In order to motivate a child to read, one has to remember that "all we call education, was conceived in love".³³ One has to have faith in the individuality of a child, then only he can say with Hannah Khan :

Child, give me your hand
That I may walk in the light
Of your faith in me.³⁴

If such is the influence of books, it is needless to say that the educationists, the authors, the teachers, the evaluators, the librarians, and last but not the least, the parents have before them a duty to perform in choosing, writing and selecting what children should read: all of them should be guided in the first instance by what will interest the most and by what best represents the values that need be

32. E.P.Donald Smith. A Technology of Reading and Writing, Vol. I; A Task Analysis (New York: Academic Press, 1976), p. 115.

33. Haim Ginott, op.cit., p.75.

34. Hannah Khan. Ibid., p.19.

cherished, and should always be ready to recommend other books of an unusual or less popular sort - because they can 'do' so much for children, they can 'mean' so much to them.

In this connection it is important to note that the views of the critics and selectors of children's books are of importance, because these are the people who decide whether a children's book should be published, or if published, whether it will succeed. It is strange to think that when we talk of children's book today, we are not talking about something that children buy for themselves. The child himself hardly enters the process by which quality children's books are assessed and distributed. And many of the established critics of children's books have stated plainly (to quote a few) :

....such books as Little Women and the wilder stories, without referring to specific religions, practices or creeds, leave children with the conviction that decent, kindly people can maintain an inner serenity even as they struggle with and master the evils that threaten them.... they (children) need books that, in the course of a good story have to develop clear standards of right and wrong.³⁵

These views are not confined to one commentator only. Charlotte Huck and Doris Young say :

35. May Hill Arbutnot. Children and Books (Chicago: Scott Foresman and Company, 1957), p.4.

Through reading and guided discussion of their reading experiences, children may gain understanding of self and others. They may come to realize that all behaviour is caused and results from individual needs. Children may gain insight into their own behaviour and the process of growth by identifying with individuals and families in good literature.³⁶

Dr. Bernice Cooper wrote in an article on Laura Ingalls Wilder in a recent number of *Elementary English*:

...the value of the Little House is enhanced for boys and girls because Laura Ingalls Wilder's philosophy of life, without didacticism, permeates the series. That philosophy is expressed in the letter from Mrs. Wilder which the sixth grade received in response to their letters to her. She wrote, 'But remember it is not the things that you have that make you happy. It is love and kindness, helping each other, and just plain being good.'³⁷

The Free Library of Philadelphia has laid down the policy regarding the selection of children's books as under:

In the field of purely recreational reading, stress is laid upon those books which develop the imaginative faculties, promote understanding and cultivate worthwhile ideas and values.... Recreational books of all kinds, whether story or fact, are purchased with a view towards giving pleasure in reading and developing healthy attitudes towards the family, the community, the nation and the world.³⁸

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36. Charolette Huck and Doris A. Young. Children's Literature in Elementary School (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1961), p. 276.
 37. Dr. Bernice Cooper as quoted by John Rowe Townsend, op.cit., p.160.
 38. Ibid., p.160.

The authors need to establish a relationship with their readers because as Charles Lamb has said, "To mind the inside of a book is to entertain one's self with another man's brain." As a general rule children better not be exposed to a book from which they cannot derive some important benefit - may be a training in discipline, may be a lesson in dignity of labour, honesty, or developing friendship and maintaining personal relationships or a developing sense of responsibility, respect for others, or awareness of duty, or provoking a feeling of love, sacrifice or even kindness in him.

As stated earlier, Mrs. Browning has referred to achieving 'good' by plunging 'soul forward' into a 'book's profound', and in order to offer this 'good' to children, to place this 'beauty and salt of truth' before them, one has to choose the 'right' book for them. And what the child ought to have, is apt to be something that fits in with the image of our society as serious, well-meaning conscencious people feel it ought to be. Perhaps now is the time to pause and think just what we are doing and the dangers we run.

With all the moral preaching and didacticism in children's books, we may face, and probably are facing a few unpleasant situations. First, the child opts out of the whole procedure, and reads comics, or nothing. Afterall 'he' has the ultimate 'veto'; however much the adults approve

of a book, persuade him to go through it - no power on earth can make him read it, if he doesn't want to, or if he doesn't like it; and eventually this might result into the existence of a whole lot of approved books that the children will not read. This is a sizable danger.

This might also have an adverse effect on authorship. After all authors have to survive, and maintain their families. Why should they write books which, they know, will be lying in the library shelves untouched - that are not going to be accepted by children? The people who pay the piper, call the tune. True, there are books in which the author does not preach really, but the children in his book may be truthful, honest, straightforward and well behaved. Philippa Pearce's Tom's Midnight Garden could be a good example for that :

'Who have our fighters been?' Calvin asked.

'Jesus!' Charles Wallace said, 'why, of course, Jesus!'

'Of course!' Mrs. Whatsit said. 'Go on Charles, love. There were others. All your great artists. They have been lights for us to see by'.

'Leonardo-da-Vinci?' suggested Calvin tentatively.

'And Michel Angelo?'

'And Shakespeare', Charles Wallace called out, 'and Bach! And Pasteur, and Madam Curie and Einstein!'

Now Calvin's voice rang with confidence -

'And Schweitzer, Gandhi, and Buddha and Beethoven...'

Here the author's aim is to induct in a very subtle way the greatness which these people stood for.

There is another danger - that is of evaluating or judging these books by wrong standards e.g. there is a trend now-a-days to bring out books about the current problems facing the country about minorities, provincialism, racial problems and so on. The criterion to judge children's books should not be the representation of these problems, but the merit of these books.

Our emphasis on such content and on values alone exposes us to certain such risks. It is agreed that it may not be irrelevant that a book 'may' contribute to moral perception of social adjustment of a minority group, or the society in general; but in writing, can there be a substitute for creativity and imagination? In criticism, perhaps there can be no true criterion except the literary merit of a book. And one of the important ingredients of this literary merit is language and style.

CHAPTER V

LANGUAGE AND STYLE

There he sits with a pen in his hand and a sheet of blank paper staring at him - the battle against words is on. It is a lifetime battle - the struggle of an author for the right word in the right place. Words form the writing material of an author. According to Margot Isbert, they are the 'imperfect tools' in his hands which he uses to 'transmit his ideas, pictures and images' to his readers. Words can be such fun !

Some giggle like tickles, or pucker like
pickles, or jingle like nickles, or tingle
like prickles... And then ...your poem is
done!¹

Words can also be tricky. Sometimes the author finds they are too many, sometimes too torn out and sometimes too cheap to cope with. He has to form his language through these slippery, fish like words - language which gives expression to his ideas. Therefore, the words that he uses are important.

1. Kenneth Koch. Rose, Where Did You Get That Red?
(New York: Random House, 1973), p.7.

There was a time when language was something sacred, when words were few and precious and potent. A word could give life and death, it could bless or curse, exorcise evil spirits, call the protective forces, make the sun rise and the rains come, the crops grow and animals bear young.... The reverence for language, for words has to be a part of writer's quest for truth, for clarity, for pursuit - never quite accomplished....²

There are words of all kinds. There are words that make us 'shudder and wince' e.g. 'wormwood, persimmon, alum and quince'; there are words that 'tighten' and the words that 'roll' e.g. 'tension, turmoil, chaos and spoil'; there are words that 'soothe' and 'tranquillize' e.g. 'slumbering, rainbows and butterflies'; there are also words that 'shimmer and beguile' e.g. 'stars, ships, peacocks, fire-light and smile'....

And always words
That make life full,
Love, laughter, home,
Peace, beautiful.³

Afterall what are words ?

Words are - how, what you think inside
Comes out.

And how to remember what you might
Forget about.

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2. Margot Benary Isbert. "On Words, Singleness of Mind and the Genius Loci", The Horn Book Magazine, XL:2, April 1965, p. 203.
 3. E.B. de Vito in "The Christian Science Monitor" as quoted in The Readers Digest, December 1980, p.113.

Some words are gay and bright,
 And full of light
 Like tinsel and silver
 And sparkle and spin,
 While lurk and murk
 Or moan or groan
 Are just as dark as night.⁴

So, these are the words that form language, which, according to G.B. Hill, is the 'dress of thoughts'.⁵ It is something intensely personal, closely connected with the development of intelligence, and as such, is both the cause and the result of emotions for the originator and its receiver.

Children learn to speak by being spoken to and listened to. Parents can therefore, make a major contribution to ease with which children will learn to want to read if they enjoy their baby's company and appreciate his efforts to communicate with them. Until he cannot move into environment, it must be brought to him.⁶

The child's developing faculty in language allows him to understand and communicate with others in his linguistic community. The basic elements of language development during pre-school period involve a number of development skills. The child's ability to comprehend and understand what others say to him is the fundamental language learning task...another language learning skill that develops

4. Ann and Paul Rand. Sparkle and Spin, (New York: Hart Court Brace and Company, 1957), unpagged.

5. G.B. Hill (ed.) Lives of English Poets, Vol. I, Cowley, 118, p. 58.

6. Pamela Mc Kewon. Reading, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974), p.11.

rapidly during pre-school period is 'vocabulary growth'.

According to John Dill,

the increase in his vocabulary is due to direct instruction from others, his broadening social experience and general intellectual abilities.⁷

He, in order to emphasize this point has provided a table⁸

Age (years)	Number of words
1	3
2	272
3	896
4	1540
5	2072
6	2562

There are certain factors that influence language learning, and as a result, during the development course of language acquisition, it does not proceed at a uniform rate amongst all children. Obviously, their language abilities differ as much as any other behaviour. This is caused by a variety of factors. These may be broadly categorised as 'maturation' and 'learning'. Another factor is the level of intelligence in a child. Highly verbal children have been found achieving a high score on an intelligence test.

7. John R. Dill. Child Psychology in Contemporary Society, (Boston: Hollbrook Press Inc. 1978), p.206.

8. D.P.Ausubel and E.V.Sullivan in "Theory and Problems of Child Development" (2nd ed., New York: Grune and Startton, 1970). Ibid., p.207.

From a non-linguistic perspective, language can be said to have two basic forms: a standard version and a dialect. The standard version is endorsed and used by a majority of individuals and institutions within the society. The dialect is a variety or a version of a language. Mollie Hunter outlines the psycholinguistic theory which defines 'dialect' as a form of speech mutually acceptable with a group or area.⁹ From this definition the theory emerges that standard English is simply the group dialect of the educated and therefore no more valid in the cultural sense, than any other form of dialect - however ungrammatical such a form might be ! It may not be right to think that one version of English - the standard Queen's English - is superior to another. The danger of this thinking is quite evident in our educational institutions. Here any version of dialect is frowned upon - even the mother tongue is not spared on this point. It is done to the extent that sometimes one feels that it can impair the child's intelligence. Though this view does not have much strength in it, it has wide-spread popularity. In England some educationists feel that a dual language system should be adopted in the schools. Whatever may be the position there, in India the standard English will

9. Mollie Hunter in "If You Can Read: Part-I, The Horn Book Magazine, LV: 3: June 1978, p. 259.

always be the dominant language in the educational institutions. The reason is quite obvious.

English is a foreign language to which an average child in India is exposed after he has acquired mastery in reading and writing in his mother tongue. It is a second language for him for all practical purposes. We cannot afford to expose our children to any variety of English other than the standard English. The child is likely to get confused in learning it, and is bound to lose interest in it.

The bilingual or trilingual system is prevalent in India. According to Lugo and Harshley (1974), the word 'bilingual' is used to refer to a person who is competent in using - listening, speaking, writing and/or reading a second language.¹⁰ Researchers have proved that truly bilingual children obtain higher scores on intelligence tests than the monolingual children. This was established by Peel and Lambert in 1962, and by Gardner in 1966.¹¹

In India, some educationists have given an argument that for a non-English speaking child, learning through his native language leads to a higher level of achievement. Soon after India became independent, there was a strong wave in this direction. Three levels of English were introduced

10. As quoted by John R. Dill, op. cit., pp. 212-213.

11. Ibid., p.212.

in Indian schools: Elementary English, English 'O' (ordinary), and English 'A' (advanced). It might have helped and satisfied the 'ego' of the educationists then, but it certainly became the cause of the deteriorating and falling standards of English in our country. The authorities took the idea to the extent of teaching of English through the medium of mother-tongue. Obviously the students, who hardly get exposed to speaking, reading or writing English but for one period in schools, took the learning of English 'easy', and gradually the works of famous English poets like Wordsworth, Shelly, Byron, Keats; or playwrights like Shakespeare, Bernard Shaw; or essayists like Charls Lamb or Francis Bacon became unknown to them.

After independence, there was another wave to do away with English, because the argument was that it is a sign of two hundred years of slavery in India. One may agree with the sentiments of people that we should see to the maximum development of regional languages in the country, but at the same time it is essential to remember that English is a language which can facilitate exchange of ideas almost all over the world. The students of higher grades, or of technical education, even today have to depend on books produced abroad. True, one should not live in the 'past', but till we are in a position to

develop 'understandable' literature in regional languages for the younger generation which can fulfil their needs, we should refrain from being 'fanatics' about doing away with English as such.

In fact, for any one of a different mother-tongue, English is a difficult language to learn. K.M.Ralston says:

The refusal of English to be bound by either logic or etymology is at once its strength and its weakness. To those who might be 'Roosian' or French or Turk or 'Prussian', or perhaps Italian, to quote Bill Bobstay of H.M.S. Pinafore, it must be rather baffling to find that although the plural of fox is foxes, the plural of ox is not oxes; although the plural of man is men, the plural of pan is not pen; although the plural of foot is feet, the plural of boot is not beet; and although the plural of goose is geese, the plural of moose is never meese.¹²

The plurals of nouns are pitfalls just as the tenses of verbs are traps, as difficult to avoid, and an Indian child, with a French child,

floundering in the tenses of verb to fly might be thrown into despair by the following lines:

Imprisoned was a fly and a flea in a flue,
But they soon discovered what they had to do.

Said the fly, 'Let us flee!'

'Let us fly', said the flea.

So the fly and the flea flew through a flaw
in the flue.¹³

12. K.M.Ralston, "A Few Ill-Chosen Words", The Horn Book Magazine, XLIII:1; February 1967, p.42.

13. Ibid., p.42.

The more a language undergoes a change, the greater the need for a standard of some sort, and perhaps there cannot be a better scale of standard than the best usage of the best writers - best usage of best writers, because at times even these master minds doze off e.g. Dickens used 'trustful' for 'trustworthy', 'aggravating' for 'irritating' and 'mutual' for 'common'.

This type of language which is common in books produced abroad, is likely to create confusion in the minds of the young children. By the time an average Indian child is in a position to understand these usages, he becomes mentally matured, and some of the concepts do not appeal to him. He has already out grown the age of appreciating Nonsense

Verses like :

If a pig wore a wig,
 What could we say ?
 Treat him as a gentleman
 And say, 'Good day'.
 If his tail chanced to fail
 What could we say ?
 Send him to the tailoress
 To get one new.¹⁴

He is not even capable of comprehending and appreciating the poetic beauty of language e.g.,

¹⁴. Christiana Rossetti. "Sing Song" (Macmillans), as appeared in Anthology of Children's Literature, edited by Edna Johnson et. al. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1959), p.45.

She started joyfully for the mountain. During the night the wind had blown away all the clouds; the dark blue sky was spreading overhead, and in its midst was the bright sun shining down on the green slopes of the mountain where the flowers opened their little blue and yellow cups, and looked upto him smiling. Heidi went running hither and thither and shouting with delight, for here were whole patches of delicate red primroses, and there the blue gleam of the lovely gentian, while above them all laughed and nodded the tender-leaved golden citus.¹⁵

The position of English in India has been rather unstable. A tug of war has been going on between the supporters of English and those who are opposed to its usage in the country. And as usual, the victim is the child, who is expected to carry the burden to the last point. All this has resulted in faulty use of words in English by children. They tend to literally translate the phrases, sentences and even certain expressions from their mother-tongue. Whosoever might have to be blamed for this situation, the fact of the matter remains that there is a great need for Indian children to be exposed to literally sound books in English if at all we wish them to learn and enjoy this rich language.

Many people think that children could be introduced to this literary world in English language through translations. They seem to assume that translation is simply a matter of substituting a word in one language for a word in another. But the case is quite different. No doubt, it

15. Johanna Sypri, "Heidi". Ibid., p.886.

appears to be as simple as that, but when one translates the works of English literature into another language, he comes across some meaningless expressions which completely mar the beauty and grandeur of language. Donna Cross gives a beautiful example to explain this point.

People who don't speak English will never know the true majestic beauty of Shakespeare's poetry. Roudolf Flesch took a famous passage from Macbeth:

Out, out, brief candle !
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
And then is heard no more; it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury
Signifying nothing....

and compared it with eight different translations in his native language - German.... The results were depressing... Think of a German reading something like this :

Out, out short candle !
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That swaggers and gnashes his hour upon the stage
And then is heard no more. It is a tale
Told by a blockhead, full of flood of words
Signifying nothing... and believing, he is reading
Shakespeare!¹⁶

There are some more arguments for bilingual education: that it provides a necessary continuity between home and school cultures for the non-English speaking child, and also provides opportunities of exposure to and competence

16. Donna Woolfolk Cross. Word Abuse, (New York: Coward McCann and Geoghegan Inc., 1979), pp.120-121.

in a second language. But for non-English speaking child to achieve academically, more must be done than merely introducing the bilingual education. Educational programmes must be 'bicultural' as well so that the 'appropriate recognition and learning of an ethnic group's social and cultural heritage' is encouraged in the classroom.

In fact, the significance of bilingual education is probably surpassed by the importance of a bicultural education.¹⁷

Support of this study was provided by another study in which it was found that a significant relationship existed between a teacher's knowledge of Mexican-American culture and the academic achievements of his students. This holds true to Indian children as well. In order to understand English literature, they should know its background which is deep rooted in English culture. With the foreign background, which is alien to our children, they find it extremely difficult to understand what they are reading and eventually lose interest in reading altogether. According to John and Horner,

the bilingual and bicultural educative process can facilitate the move toward an open and pluralistic society which characterises a mature democracy. Such an educational process can only be realized by full and equal participation of all groups. Although some conceive of bilingual

17. J.O. Lugo, "A Comparison of Degrees of Bilingualism and Measures of School Achievement among Mexican-American Pupils" (Doctoral Dissertation) as quoted by John R. Dill, op. cit., p.213.

education as an efficient approach to the acquisition of the national language and culture on the part of minority children, others hold that bilingualism can only be successful as a mutually developed and mutually experienced process of learning and teaching involving both majority and minority communities. We subscribe this latter view.¹⁸

In India where we wish our children to learn English, and learn it well, we have to encourage them to read more and more because as Bacon said, "reading maketh a full man,... conference a ready man and writing an exact man". But for this purpose, we must have enough literature for them.

Literature is valuable because it strives for the completest understanding, the completest fulfilment. Fulfilment first of the author, then publisher, then of the reader.¹⁹

One wonders : What is literature ? According to Ezra Pound, it is "simply language charged with meaning to the utmost possible degree",²⁰ and it has two main functions: to refer and to express. The purpose of the author in writing a book for children is to provide for every child the education obtainable through reading. This does not mean

18. V.P.John and V.M. Horner. "Bilingualism and Spanish Speaking Child" in Language and Poetry edited by F. Williams, (Chicago: Markham Press, 1971), p.190.

19. Peter Abbes, English for Diversity, (London: Heinemann, 1961), p. 42.

20. Ezra Pound, A.B.C. of Reading, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1934). p.28.

education in any narrow or formalized sense, but it aims at the culture of mind and spirit that books can diffuse in life. Books can mean a lot for children so far as their individual development is concerned. Bacon said, "books will speak plain when counsellors blanch". Books offer a kind of building material for the formation of character through knowledge and thought. They give a deeper meaning and interest to living - they are means of proficiency in every walk of life. They impart deepened sensitiveness to ideals, to beauty, to pleasure and to the best emotions of life.

If books have such qualities, then is it not the duty of the educationists to offer the best of them to children? This 'literary prescription' which is put up for the benefit of any one who needs it, should be carefully put up. S.M. Crothers asks :

In regard to a book, I ask : Does it have any basis or chief ingredients ? Does the author furnish any corrective for his own exaggerations? Above all, is the remedy in a pleasant vehicle or excipient, so that it will go down easily ?²¹

Piaget did not assume that language and linguistic forms that children use, coincide with their thinking In their actions they (infants)

are constructing what they know about the world, and they are constructing their logic, such as

21. S.M.Crothers, "A Literary Clinic" in "The Pleasures of an Absentee Landlord" as quoted by Helen E. Hains in Living With Books, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1950), p.63.

classifying, ordering, conserving... What each of them represents is what Piaget calls a scheme.²²

The totality of scheme is the totality of what one knows. A large scale and subtle study by H. Sinclair in Language et. Operations (1967) also looked at relationships between language level and intellectual level. She concluded that language development is dependent on the level of thinking rather than being responsible for the level of thinking. All said and done, children are to be helped with books. Without careful help, they may

choose books that because of their 'readability' level, will not help them progress. Here I am thinking equally of child who continually chooses a book that is too low a level as of the child who tries a book too difficult to read....²³

Teachers may need to do some sort of preliminary grading or assessing of book-levels or be knowledgeable enough to suggest alternative titles on particular subjects. Education is about life, and life is a fabric of relationship and the child should be able to grasp this meaning of life through his experience. According to Michael Saunders

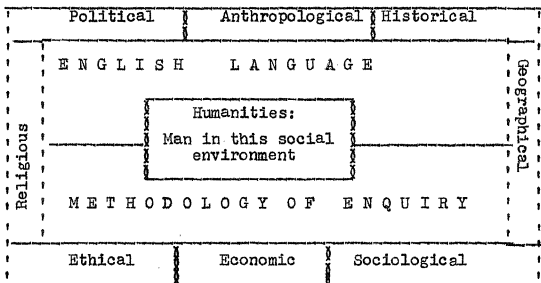
traditional teaching of subjects is death to understanding, and should go...²⁴

22. Milton Schwebel and Jane Ralph. Piaget in the Classroom, (New York: Basic Books Inc. Publishers, 1973), p.137.

23. Elizabeth J. Goodacre, Children and Learning to Read (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971), p.38.

24. Michael Saunders, Development in English Teaching (London: Open Books Publishing Ltd., 1976), p.10.

In this connection the model given by W.F. Clarke (Warwick, p. 106) for integration of total curriculum may be looked at ...²⁵



The above model being syllabus centred might lack depth and definition - this fear is shared by many. Patrick Creber in Sense and Sensibility makes the point that however 'free' the teacher might attempt to make his pupil's choices and activities, the classroom conditions must always impose constraints and the pupils, whatever the teacher's impressions, will in some way or other, be directed by his wishes and attitudes.

Reading is important for all children. Isaac D'Israeli once remarked : "There is an art of reading, as well as an

25. Ibid., p.12.

art of thinking, an art of writing"...²⁶ In order to secure this 'art' of reading, the educationists, the teachers, the writers and the parents owe a debt to them. - because according to Francis Bacon : "Every man is a debtor to his profession", and that debt is to provide children with the right kind of reading material. They have to have the books that they would love to read over and over again. Of course, they are not to be 'asked' or 'told' to read a particular book - but the world of books should be well within their reach - the world of selected books.

The author, in his effort to help the child to grow his vocabulary and improve his language ability, has to bear in mind the fact that he is conveying something substantial, something important by which he wants to contribute towards the total development of the child's personality. The literature under scrutiny in this treatise depicts many variants, and contains usually accepted style-makers e.g., slangs, collocations, grammatical usages, and ellipses etc. We have to see how far their place is justified in children's books.

Style

Jonathan Swift has said, "proper words in proper places make the true definition of a style."²⁷ It consists

26. Isaac D'Israeli, Literary Character, Chapter II.

27. Jonathan Swift in Letter to a Young Clergyman, 9 January, 1720.

in adding to a given thought all the circumstances calculated to provide the whole effect that the thought ought to produce. The term is normally used with reference to the manner of choosing, ordering and arranging the words. A modern version of the very frequent view of style as choice is that of Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren. The authors, in their book Understanding Fiction have stated that

in this book style is used merely to refer to the selection and ordering of language....²⁸

According to them, the term 'style' in its larger sense, is essentially the same thing as form. However, the literature usually contains stylemakers like slangs, colloquial language, ellipses and grammatical usages etc. But over and above, the author should be able to handle the language, he should be able to create with intensity and love what he creates. Boris Pasternak, the Russian Nobel Prize winner believed that the greatness of a writer has nothing to do with his subject, but 'only with how much it touches the author'. It is the writer's involvement, his use of particular words, idioms, phrases and his voice which makes his writings unforgettable. It contains a certain rhythm, which makes him recognizable. Peculiar and particular choice of words is a part of style. One could quote Kipling in Just so story to elaborate this point:

28. Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren. Understanding Fiction (New York: Appleton, 1943), p.605.

It was indeed Superior Comestible (that's magic), and he put it on the stove because 'he was allowed to cook on that stove, and he baked it and he baked it till it was all done brown and smelt most sentimental.

Perhaps it was only Kipling who could use the word 'Sentimental' for smell, and describe it so well! The richness of language, the crispness of words and the passion for loving details can be witnessed in The Dolls' House by Rumer Goddon.

She liked to think sometimes of the tree of whose wood she was made, of its strength and of the sap that ran through it and made it bud and put out leaves every spring and summer, that kept it standing through the winter storms and wind. 'A little, a very little of that tree is in me', said Tottie. 'I am a little of that 'tree'. She liked to think of it.

There is a poetic vision spread all over the passage. There is a serging vitality which makes it different from other writings. To quote Eleanor Cameron :

"Style, then, whether it is urgent or halting, empty or freighted, flat or many dimensioned, dull or luminous, knotted or lucid, would seem to be something that expresses the writer to his 'inmost core in more ways than he himself, even, is aware ofI would define it as one (stylist) who is concerned with 'how' he says, what he says with maintaining the upper hand over his material, exerting the discipline and control which in the end result in the effect of effortlessness...29

29. Eleanor Cameron: "On Style and the Stylist. The Horn Book Magazine, XL:1, February 1964, pp.31-32.

Slang

"Oh, my dear, indeed it has been difficult for me lately. I really have the 'blues'. I have been so 'down the doleful dumps'. It's my husband again of course.... the man gets 'drunk' every night.... he 'drinks like a fish'slips out and 'paints the town red'..... If I 'don't take to the blush' to get out of it, I'll just start to 'bum around'" and so on.

Those are the solid complaints made in a 'slangy' way. Slang is easy enough to use, but very difficult to write about.

It is a peculiar kind of vagabond language, always hanging on the outskirts of legitimate speech, but continually straying or forcing its way into the most respectable company...³⁰

According to Enkvist,

Some meaningless repetitions of linguistic items acquire meanings as style-makers. For instance the swearing and cursing of a soldier introduces a stream of stylistically significant items - which may be called style - reminders - into statements that would otherwise remain neutral. The origin of slang can be sought in an effort to create and introduce new style-makers unavoidable in the existing inventory of linguistic items....³¹

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30. Greenough and Kittredge, "Word and Their Ways in English Speech" (1902) as quoted by Eric Patridge, Slang: Today and Yesterday (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1960), p.1.
 31. Nils Enkvist, et. al. Linguistic and Style (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), p.35.

The slangs may appear normal and justified, if they occur in books for adults. It depends, on the character in a story who is using them - but in books for children, even if their occurrence is justified being suited to the character in the story, it is not proper to use them. It is the time when children are learning the language. The use of slangs might confuse them and they may also start using them which is not proper. In books like David Copperfield and Oliver Twist they do appear, but in the simplified versions they need to be deleted or modified.

Eric Patridge gives some samples of slangs in literature :

In A Devil, A Boy and a Trade Designer Barry Pain³² gives us a most significant phonetically spelt transcript of Cockney!

"Why, grandfawther, I believe yer like me fur a byeby. I wouldn't do it not fur all the money ye've gort....I have knowed you, grandfawtherand I don't know no more abart yer nor whort I did then...."(Cockney Slang).

There are other examples too. In his Book (1862) Artemus ward³³ adopts the convention of a travelling showman, and thus ensures himself a licence to speak with complete linguistic freedom:

32. Eric Patridge, op.cit., p.157.

33. Ibid., p.333.

"I thawt I'd ride up to the next town on a little Jaunt, to rest my Branes which had bin severely rackt by my mental efforts. So I sent over to the Rale Road Offiss and axed the Soperintendent for a pass."

'You a editor ?' he axed, evijently on the point of snickerin'etc.

Huckleberry Finn, like most of Twain's humorous work, is considerably more interesting for its use of dialect than for slang.

The classics in Slang, a novel by Harry C. Witwer³⁴ presents another example:

'Look here!' I says, 'I may be a millionaire and and not know it....'
 'just a moment;' interrupts Ethel, 'Money is not the open sesame to my heart.'
 'The open which?' I say, with a blank, viz. natural look. 'What d'ye mean open sesame?'
 Don't you know the story of Alibaba and Forty Thieves?' asks Ethel with a smile.
 'No.....'
 'Good Heavens, what 'did' you read when you were a child?' she exclaims.
 'the help wanted advertisements Ethel,' I says leanin' over the counter and speakin' soft and low, 'When 'I' was a child, I was too busy bustlin' for food and drinks to read any books !I been workin' for a livin' since I been ten years old....'

Now, all this is good for adults, or even for those who have acquired mastery over language. This certainly is not suitable for Indian Children. They are more likely to be bored, fatigued and tired in finding out the meaning of

34. Ibid., p.344.

these words and by the time they are able to understand it, if at all they do, the book will be found locked in the drawer. Language is "a highly complicated activity" and is "wholly learned"...³⁵ The language has to have some meaning for a child - it must be something which he can understand and follow. After all what does the reader bring to the study of his first literary work in a foreign language ? Acquaintance in the mother tongue with the plot, characters, atmosphere and general significance of a story may well be an excellent preliminary step to the study of that story in a new language. This is comparable to the clarification of what the words stand for in an expression in the mother tongue before giving its equivalent in the language being learned. The relating of two takes place at the psychological level. That is for the most part preverbal, and is in no sense the same as translating or matching one word with another.

The first step towards gaining knowledge through reading is reading between the lines - one of the most important steps in literary study. In any story there will be first of all a plot in which something happens to some one, at sometime and in some place, If the child, after reading the story, can answer what, where, when and how, he has been able to infer the meaning, he has successfully comprehended the story.

35. Ibid., p.344.

A step next to this is perhaps an important step. The author uses a language through which he wishes not only to 'relate', demonstrate or prove but to persuade and impress the reader. For this purpose, he counts upon the power of the language, of metaphor to make his words convey more than they actually say. It is this quality that distinguishes a literary writing from a scientific writing. Lastly, we may ask as to how well the author has accomplished what he set out to do? A child who has taken the first step, who has been guided through the second, will certainly have enjoyed the experience of reading the book.

The books that are being referred to in this study are meant for extensive reading. Here a short story, or a chapter, a sequence of chapters of a novel, or an entire one act play has to be assigned, read, and briefly reported on as a single unit. Nelson Brook says :

The student should understand that in this type of reading his interest is to center upon a total or over-all comprehension of character and events, rather than upon the precise details of either language or story content....³⁶

Use of Colloquial Language

A few explorations of children's literature will reveal the important image-rivers floating through its style.

36. Nelson Brook, Language and Language Learning(2nd ed.) (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World Inc. 1964), p.173.

There may be references to gardens, to castles, to heroic innocence as well as to darkness appearing insistently enough to be regarded as transcending the pre-occupations of any single writer. They constitute a general literary response to experiences. Colloquial style followed the concreteness of diction and simplicity in syntax. The use of colloquial writing started primarily in dialect pieces and in fictional dialogue; and gradually people became conscious of the techniques of colloquial writing.³⁷

There are, according to Richard Bridgman, a few characteristics of this style,

- a) stress on the individual verbal unit,
- b) a resulting fragmentation of syntax, and
- c) the use of repetition to bind and unify.

Here long words are eliminated, or used sparingly. The sentences are shorter. Details are fewer, and those offered, are precise and concrete. The immediate material world claims all the attention of the child.

Speech and writing enjoy an intimate and not altogether separable relationship, but the two forms of verbalization do differ in their physical performance and reception.

Gradually a written language says something, and says it differently than the spoken language.³⁸

One can elaborate this point by referring to Mark

37. Richard Bridgman, The Colloquial Style in America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), p.12.

38. Ibid., p.15.

Twain, who when he prepared a reading from 'Huckleberry Finn', added italics to his verbal emphases and he repeated phrases. One portion originally read :

That was so - I couldn't get around that, no way.
That was where it pinched.

But in his prompt copy he changed it to :

That was so - Yes, it was so - I couldn't get
around 'that' no way. 'That' was where it
'pinched...'39

The colloquial writer will retain, and even at the pitch of stylization, cultivate repetition. If one wants to look at the glaring samples of colloquial style, he should look into the works of Henry James, Mark Twain or Ernest Hemingway. While reading Mark Twain's prose one can see images rising from words, whereas a passage from Henry James book, out of context, draws as much attention to its own surface, to the words that compose it, as it does to its content: e.g.,

I crept to their doors and listened; they were snoring, so I top-toed along, and got down the stairs all right.

(Huckleberry Finn: Chapter 27)

There was at last, with everything that made for it, an occasion when he got from Kate, on what she now spoke of as his eternal refrain, an answer of which he was to measure afterwards the precipitating effect.

(The Wings of the Dove: Chapter 27)

39. Mark Twain, Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1958), p. 261.

So far as repetition of words are concerned, one can see it for himself in the following passage of Earnest Hemingway :

The wife liked him. She liked the deadly serious way he received any complaints. She liked his dignity. She liked the way he wanted to serve her. She liked the way he felt about being a hotel-keeper. She liked his old, heavy face and big hands.

("Cat in the Rain" from the short stories of Hemingway, p. 266)

All this is an effort to naturalise fictional talk, either by imitating dialects or by loosening literary representations of standard writing. True, colloquial language is simple, understandable and could be well within the comprehension of children, but one has to see all this in relation to Indian children. One has to keep in mind that the 'conversational' language of the West is not the language with which Indian children are familiar. This language is full of dialects which makes the comprehension difficult e.g.

"Well, thish-yer Smitey had rat-tarriers, and chicken cocks, and tomcats, and all them kind of things, till you couldn't rest, and you couldn't fetch nothing for him to bet on, but he'd match you".....⁴⁰ and so on.

Style plays an important role in the books for children. The author, in his efforts to help the child

40. Charles Neider, ed., The Complete Short Stories of Mark Twain (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1957), p.3.

grow his vocabulary and improve his language ability, has to bear in mind the fact that he is conveying something substantial, something material enough through which he wants to contribute towards the total development of his personality. The style of the author attracts the child to the book; it motivates him to read it from cover to cover. Style describes the different ways the writers have of expressing what they want to say. Each one of us forms his sentences differently, and the personality of the writer is woven into the manner of his expression. Style is the man himself, and therefore, it differs from person to person. The literature under scrutiny in this study depicts such variants. The purpose of this analysis of style is not to do anything with the enjoyment and elegant description of literary qualities. The aim here is merely to establish the essential traits that set a style apart from the language. The child is expected to learn the language through textbooks in the classroom with the help of the teacher, but when he is exposed to other books, which are not textbooks, he also learns to relax and enjoy the effects of style over and above learning the language. According to Goethe, style is

a higher, active principle of composition by which the writer penetrates and reveals the inner form of his subject....⁴¹

41. Nil Erik Enkvist, op.cit., pp.10-11.

"Like children, at the feet of a conjurer, people react to style with varying attitudes. Some simply relax and enjoy the effects, and perhaps later recollect their emotions in tranquility. Others feel the naughty boy's urge to peep up the performer's sleeve and to expose the partitions of his hat, even at the risk of ignoring part of the show and of irritating the rest of the audience...."⁴²

Elliptical Expressions

These are a common feature in literary style used for children's literature. Ellipsis in dialogue may take place under three conditions, which can occur in various combinations e.g. repetition, expansion and replacement. The link between question and responses is often re-inforced by ellipsis e.g.

Repetition:

- A. Have you spoken to the doctor ?
- B. (Yes) I have /spoken to / the doctor /
done to / him.

Expansion:

- A. Will they lose the game ?
- B. Probably they will lose (the game).

Replacement:

This most commonly occurs with 'wh' questions where the element is normally replaced in the response :

⁴². Ibid., p.3.

A. Who told your father ?

B. Mary told (my father)
did (so)

Now while making use of these expressions with non-English speaking children one has to be sure that they have already reached that stage of attainment in understanding the underlying meanings and implications.

The first essential of a book for children, therefore, is that it must be a truthful book, using language honestly, may be not in a stylish way. The writer cannot ignore his readers or afford to keep them at any distance further than the back of his mind. The real writer for children has to decide first 'what' he is going to share with the child, and 'how' he is going to do it.

The children's author who boasts that he doesn't think of his audience, but writes for himself, is showing that he has no real claim to understanding what his readers are struggling with.... he might think twice about being an author for children....⁴³

But, at the other extreme, experience suggests that books written in cold blood to meet only an educational requirement have none of that life and sparkle which go to making a 'good reading'. An elusive quality of language is

43. Christopher Daper, et.al. "School Libraries : Theory and Practice" as quoted by Roger Collinson in "A Sense of Audience" in Writers, Critics and Children, edited by Geoff Fox et. al. (New York: Agathon Press, 1976), pp. 37-38.

important. It may be its flavour, tone, atmosphere, or its force of association, all of which have deeply to do with meaning. A child's most telling condemnation often is, "It's boring" The language must have an attractive and interesting personality of its own.

Every one knows, of course, except the reviewer, that literature isn't a language laboratory, a teaching machine that grinds away, turning us all into skilled manipulators of Standard English (or American)...⁴⁴

It is also true that children do not read reviews. Left to their own devices, they choose the books they want to read by a secret formula, they manage to keep from adults....⁴⁵

Contextualisation

It is assumed that children should not be asked to read a passage until they have a recognition knowledge of all the words used therein. He should not get stuck up every now and then to 'look up' the meaning of each word which is new to him as he encounters it. It also happens many a time that he keeps on reading and 'guessing' the meanings of the new words while trying to comprehend the passage.

44. Aiden Chambers in "Reviewers Railments: A game for Children's Books" as appeared in Crosscurrents of Criticism edited by Paul Heins, (Boston: The Horn Book Inc. 1977), pp. 15-16.

45. Ibid., p.19.

One has to be extremely careful in using them. Even if there is a new word to a page in a children's book, and if it is properly contextualized, or glossed, or explained so as to convey its meaning, children can understand it. But if they have to stop, look right and left, then again look to the right and then only go, their speed of reading is hampered i.e. if they have to 'look up' the dictionary everytime, their comprehension is affected, their speed of reading is slowed down and as a result, their interest in reading is done away with.

Another point with which the writers have to be careful in using the words is well explained by Joseph Ecclesive :

There is no law that says you have to use big words when you write or talk. There are lots of small words, and good ones, that can be made to say the things that you want to say. It may take a bit more time to find them, but it can be well worth it.

Small words can be crisp, brief, terse - go to the point, like a knife. They have a charm all their own. They dance, twist, sing. Like sparks in the night they light the way for the eyes of those who read. They are the grace notes of prose. You know what they say the way you know a day is bright and fair - at first sight. Small words can catch large thoughts and hold them up for all to see, like rare stones in rings of gold, or joy in the eyes of a child. Some make you feel, as well as see; the cold, deep dark of night; the hot, salt sting of tears.

Small words move with ease where big words stand still - or worse, bog down and get in

Having finished their Pic-nic without much apology,
 The party all quitted the Hall Etymology;
 But such a litter was scattered about in the room
 That when interjection came up with her broom
 Her surprise was so great that she nothing could say
 But oh ! Ah ! Good Luck ! Well - a Day !

All the passages given above are samples of making
 dull things, even grammar, interesting for children. Children
 love having fun with words and their spellings, if they know
 how a simple spelling error can change the entire meaning
 of what they want to say.

He has 3 sutes of Apparel, and 3 suites in Law
Ask the carpenter for his Ax
 He cool'd his milk because he could not eat it so hot
 A person or priest, a third person
 The highest Room in the house, the city of Rome
 If he were wise he would wear warmer clothes...⁴⁸

Sometimes children also like to have fun with tongue-
 twisters, or alliterations. They like to try to repeat them,
 and play with them. "The Butter Betty Bought" is a good
 example for this.

"Betty Botta bought some butter
 But, said she, This butter's bitter :
 If I put it on my batter
 It will make my batter bitter

⁴⁸. Thomas Dilworth : "A new Guide to English Tongue" (p.70).
Ibid., p.123.

But a bit O' better butter
 Will make my batter better
 So she bought a bit O' butter
 Better than the bitter butter,
 Made her bitter butter better
 So 't was better, Bettey Botta
 Bought a bit O' bitter butter.....⁴⁹

India provides an excellent illustration of the intricate tie between the distribution of languages and power structure within a given society. The conflict to select vernaculars for public education came up when India was under British rule. It is known as the struggle of orientalist and anglicists. It was resolved by Lord Macaulay's Minute in favour of anglicists promulgated in 1835. From this date to the declaration of Indian Independence, English became the principal language of instruction, while vernaculars were used in lower grades. By the end of 19th century English had filled its major function for the introduction of European ideas and techniques, and England, in a sense, prepared its own exit by training native Indians in the skills of modern statehood.

As discussed earlier, teaching of English suffered a set back after Independence and there was a gradual deterioration in the standard of this language. The worst was the influence of mother tongue both in spoken and written English. As it is, there is a great danger in translation method, and

⁴⁹. Henry Steele Commager (ed.) St. Nicholas Anthology
 (New York: Random House, 1948), p.137.

that is of over-literal translation. Such samples can be picked up from a number of children's books written by Indian authors.

The researcher had analysed a number of children's books from the view point of suitability of language content for the target age group and came across number of such examples. A few samples of sub-standard English are noted down :

.....garlands of flowers hung from
the arch. (p.3)

Why not cut this tom foolery ? (p.16)
.....gambling fever (p.5)⁵⁰

or

Whose son do you think you are ? (p.18)
Where we with all our skill have failed ?
How can a mere lad succeed ?
Where will our dignity be ? (p.22)...⁵¹

Was famous far beyond his realm (p.1)
Hardly a soul on the streets walked lightly (p.2)
Money flows like water in his treasury (p.3)
.....thought no end of her beauty (p.23)
.....heady perfumes (p.23)....⁵²

50. Krishna Chaitanya, Vasantsena, (Bombay: India Book House, 1973).

51. Shanty Mohanty : Folktales of Orissa (New Delhi : Sterling Publishers, 1970).

52. Narayana Gordia, Tales of Vikramaditya (Bombay: India Publishing House, 1975).

There is no end to such 'classical' errors. One writer thinks that "water is a wet liquid" (p.15), there can be a "source left over" (p.57) (p.27) or one can wear a "startling shoe" (p.57)....⁵³

Another writer says "I have to marry my daughter next month"....⁵⁴

Such expressions cannot be permitted in the books for children who are trying to learn English. One also comes across expression like

"You have killed a man. Have you, or haven't you?"
(p.18)

or

"That what the man had said was correct"
"giving a dowry with a girl" (p.19)

or

"to split some money under the tree" (p.20)

or

even "to drink a drop of water at my hand" (p.4)...⁵⁵

The author here is tempted to say :

"Mrs. Bali caught her breath softly (p.3)

or report that

"his tickets and spending money were safely in his pocket" (p.5),

and can make a character

"so excited that he jumped up and down in joy" (p.5)...⁵⁶

53. Mrs. G.S. Krishnayya, Echo Book of Fun (Bombay; India Book House); Year of publication not mentioned.

54. N.K. Aggarwala, The Riddle of the Status and other stories. (New Delhi; S. Chand & Co., year of publication not mentioned).

55. B.K. Brogohain, Folk Tales of Meghalaya (New Delhi; Sterling

Some writers have gone a step ahead. They have committed gross errors of usage and grammar, e.g.

"Its' time I take her to the world beyond" (p.12)

or

"Wind God was more powerful than himself" (p.13)

or even

"Where do you have a piece of land for the purpose?"
(p.102)....⁵⁷

There are a good number of unusual and unacceptable usages of expressions and also of grammar in some of these books :

"He had a wife as respectable as she was fat and several small children who were kept carefully out of his way in the nursery wing of the palace;"
(p.8)

or

"She decided she wanted to get married" (p.23)....⁵⁸

Another writer happens to say :

"With the day's walking they were all tired and anxious to retire for the night (p.17).

His "Weaver did not lag behind in vehemence"(p.17)

He goes to the extent of saying that "sending the trend of the virdict, the brahmin intervened in desperation" (p.19)

and that he "went fast asleep" (p.62)

and also "he was like a demon for work"

(p.115)⁵⁹

57. Nagendra Sharma; Folk Tales of Nepal, (New Delhi; Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1976).

58. Deepak Dubey : Folk Tales from Punjab (Bombay; India Book House Education Trust, 1976).

59. J. Sheorey : Folk Tales of Maharashtra (New Delhi; Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1978).

Some of the stories are literally translated with heavy pulls of didactical nature. The language at many places is grammatically wrong and does not coincide with the standard form of English language e.g.

'big big bundles' instead of 'big bundles' or
'pig meat' instead of 'pork' (p.23)

'many many thousands of years ago' instead of
'thousand of years ago' (p.42)

'making a fun' instead of 'making fun' (p.46)

If he is larger than I am (p.74)....⁶⁰ and so on

There are usages as damaging as "Oh! Bhagwan! make me blind of one eye !"....⁶¹

and it is a pity that these have come from writers of repute like Mulk Raj Anand !

Surprisingly the editors have not bothered to look into the expression like :

We feel the heat through the hot news
conveyed by our skin, (p.8),

the moon is a closer friend of yours than the sun
.....the moon playing in the heavens - the game of
birth and death once every month. (p.10)....⁶²

60. B.K. Borghaim and P.C. Rai Chaudhary, Folk Tales of Nagaland, Tripura and Mizoram (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1975)

61. Mulk Raj Anand, Folk Tales of Punjab (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1978)

62. G.T.Narayana Rao: Wonders of Sky, (Bangalore: India Book House Prakashan, 1977)

These were just a few samples of the language used by our authors, which can be termed as "objectionable". Certainly we do not wish our children to be exposed to such English which can easily be called 'bad' English. If at all we wish them to learn this language, we have to see that they are offered atleast linguistically sound books which may also be well within their comprehension. There are some children who would enjoy "A spelling spat"⁶³, if they have to know what a spelling mistake can do to the language

A gnat came wailing to Gnu, a most unhappy midget. The Gnu said "Gnat, don't do like that, you put me in a figet. 'I'm sad', said Gnat. 'No, mad - just that. To save me, I can't see why folks should call us what they do, but spell us with a G". "That's true" said Gnu. Here's what we'll do: I'll write a note - so plain so strong, so sarcastic, full of spleen, they'll not offend again."

"Dear friends and Neighbour (ran the note)

We gneed to know quite clearly what gnovel gnotion makes you spell our gnames so very queerly. Gno other beast, gnorth, south, or east, gneed bear that gnouxious gnocturnals, gnesters gnibblers. Gno, and gneither, sirs gneed we.

"It gnetties and it gnags us, but there is gnaught that we can do. A gnasty gnuisance: (That's gnot gnice, but you'd be gnaughty too).

'Gnaumbskulls, and gnuunies : Gnever use that G extraordinary - it is gnonsenee, gneither ganatural, gnice gnor gneat, gnor gneecessary.

63. Nancy Byrd Turner : 'A Spelling Spat', as quoted by Henry Steele Commager, op.cit., pp.526-527.

These gnamby pamby and gnicknames make us gnervous kindly gnote, dear Gngang, and Gnighntingle, and Gnewt and Gnanny goat".

They sent the letter off post haste, and in a day or two received reply, 'It was terse and dry. It ran "Dear Nat and Nu: we feel like naves. We scarcely new in fact, we couldn't no - a silent letter'd have the nack of nifing people so.

We wash our teeth and nit our brows, and riggle on our nees, the nowledge of our retched rong so rings us. Pardon please."

'Something amiss', growled Gnu, 'with this'. He scowled above the letter.

'They have spelled my name right; all the same I can't say things look better'.

'Alas': mourned Gnat, 'this knocks me flat, I had no idea Gnu, that such a lot of things must change in changing me and you. Just look at all these idiot words. We thought we'd be in clover; instead we have got to learn to read and write and spell all over'.

'We moved too fast' Gnu said atlast.

'We might have known there are rules for spelling Gnat, I fear we've proved a pair of precious fools."

He seized a pen and scrawled in haste :

"P.S. We write to say: at length we find we do not mind the dictionary way. The silent letters aren't so bad; atleast no harm they'll do.

So please retain. And we remain as ever, Gnat and Gnu."

We wish our children to know what is happening around and also enjoy doing so. This aim can be achieved by providing them with suitable reading material in English.

The above analysis shows that the books that are available in India can be put in two categories : Books that have been

published abroad and books that have been brought out by Indian publishers. Books that have been produced abroad are no doubt sound linguistically, but many of them are above the comprehension level of Indian children. Many of the books produced in India are linguistically poor and not suitable.

The captivating, interesting style of foreign books attracts our children, but it leads them to absolute frustration when due to the local touches of slangs, the use of colloquial language and difficult words, they are unable to grasp their meaning. When children turn to the books produced in India, the literal translations from mother tongue alongwith wrong phrases and incorrect expressions make no sense to them. The results are disheartening. Instead of getting interested in reading books, they prefer to play and while away their time. They take it for granted that there can be no pleasure in reading- and reading books in English remains a remote possibility for them.

All this eventually leads to one and the only alternative : we should take pains to examine the books available in the market, select them and offer them to the school-going children so that they may not remain deprived of the pearls of wisdom which are available in abundance. We must ensure that the books that are written and produced

for them, are really worthwhile. We owe it to them. In
the words of Longfellow they are

".....better than all ballads
That ever were sung or said :
For ye are living poems
And all the rest are dead.⁶⁴

⁶⁴. H.W. Longfellow in 'Children'

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

The lad fled, on the instant, scrambled up in the high board fence, and disappeared over it.

His aunt Polly stood surprised a moment, and then broke into a gentle laugh.

'Hang the boy, can't I never learn anything ?'... I ain't doing my duty by that boy and that's the Lord's truth, goodness knows. Spare the rod and spile the child, as the Good Book says. I'm a-laying up sin and suffering for us both, I know...'¹

We too are guilty of similar 'sins' and 'sufferings' for our innumerable 'Toms' - the young children. We have not been able to give them what they need, deserve and desire. The doors which open the magic world of books are closed on them even after thirty five years of Independence, and the keys seem to have been lost. We keep wondering: who has these keys to Literature? Has some 'Selfish Giant' built a high wall around the garden where flowers of fairy tales, folklores, fables, mysteries and adventures are in full bloom, and locked the children out, putting a notice outside: 'TRESPASSERS WILL BE PROSECUTED' ? Where is the magician who can let these Aladdins out of the 'dark cave' of ignorance? They are the waiting Alibabas for the 'sesame'

1. Mark Twain, The Adventures of Tom Sawyer. (New York: The Model Library, 1922), p.18.

to open so that they may plunge neck-deep into Stevenson's Treasure Island, see through the 'looking glass' The Hundred Dresses prepared by Wanda, fondle The Golden Goose of Grimm Brothers, taste Abbie Farwell's Magic Apple and Asbjornsen's Pancake in Lewis Carroll's Mad Tea Party. They are anxious to meet Perrault's Little Red Riding Hood, and Andersen's Thumbelina, and to play with Bryan's wonderful Michael Who Missed the Train; they are keen to listen to Heidi about her wonderful experiences with Grandfather and Peter; and when they are tired, they wish to retire to their beds with Sylvia Path's Bed Book, which has

Pocket size Beds
 and Beds for Snacks
 Tank Beds, Beds
 on Elefant's backs,
 Beds that fly
 or go under water
 Bouncy Beds,

 Beds of amazing
 shapes and sizes -
 Not just a white little
 tucked in - tight little
 Nighty night little
 turnout the light little
 bed!²

But the question that stares us in the face is :
 Where is the key to this wonderful, colourful and charming
 world of books ? And once again we start looking around.

2. Sylvia Path. The Bed Book. (New York: Harper and Row
 Publishers 1976), unpagged.

Is it with the author, the publisher, or the illustrator; or with the teachers, parents or the librarians? Some one has to unlock the door and let children in to unfold the mysteries and discover things for themselves. Enough harm has already been done to them, specially with reference to literature in English.

Why do children read, if at all they do ? Perhaps they read to please adults - but they do not necessarily prefer to read the books that adults like to buy for them. They smell 'teaching' and 'preaching' in these books, which they strongly detest. Or may be, they read for similar reasons as adults do - for instant gratification; or for seeking information; or may be to escape from the crude realities of life. Whatever may be reason, one thing is certain - they look for books that offer reassurance and // a deep sense of satisfaction and a vicarious triumph. When they are very young, they identify their unhappiness with The Ugly Duckling, or with Sal picking blueberries, or even losing a tooth, and when they have finished reading, they possess a feeling that they too can stand and weather the storm when time comes. They learn that they are not the only ones to face these odds; there have been others also, like The Three Little Pigs or Little Black Sambo. They chant with Mary Austin :

When I hear the old men
 Telling of heroes
 Telling of great deeds
 Of ancient days

.....

Then I know that I too
 Shall be esteemed
 I too when my time comes
 Shall do mightily.³

When children reach their middle years they read out of curiosity, and their zest for living prompts them to reach the book shelves. They are extremely curious to know about this ever expanding world in which they find themselves. They tend to seek fun, adventure and many a time even sheer nonsense pleases them. This is the time when stories like Friend of the White Man, The Sword in the Tree, Courage of Sarah Noble, Hansel and Gretel, Boots and His Brothers build up self respect in them and they love to identify themselves with the characters shown therein. When they laugh together, when they have fun in a group, the hostilities, tensions and unhappiness break down. This is the time when stories like Charolette's Web, which may be beyond their reading level, but certainly not their enjoyment level, will offer them the 'therapy of laughter' as also the 'therapy of tears'. And children need both to learn compassion.

3. Mary Austin, "A Song of Greatness" as given in May Hill Arbuthnot's Anthology of Children's Literature. (Chicago: Scott Foresman and Company, 1961), p.31.

And then comes the preadolescent age, the age under consideration - 10 to 14. The last years between childhood and budding maturity of youth are rather hard for children. Psychologically these children need as much encouragement as the younger children do. This is the time when children try their wings and fall flat on their faces. Failure is bitter, and it takes courage even to try to get up and then try again; and this is the time, they need all the affection, comfort and encouragement to acquire compassion and build up courage so that they may face this unkind world once again.

The child who begins his life with a need for reassuring love and independent achievement, ends up with much the same note of compassionate love and kind of courage which is another phase of achievement. According to May Hill Arbuthnot :

these qualities motivate fiction for all ages and help to tie children's books into the whole stream of literature. But in children's books, the quality of love must grow and change as the child matures, until he can begin to see himself vicariously through his book heroes as loved and bestowing love, as dealing compassionately with others and above all, as picking himself up after failures or shattered hopes or grievous mistakes to try again.⁴

These are the 'Phatiks' of Rabindranath Tagore, awaiting 'holidays' for their Home-Coming. They look up with pleading eyes for help from their parents, teachers and librarians.

⁴. May Hill Arbuthnot. "Developing Life Values Through Reading" Elementary English, XLIII: January 1966, p.16.

They want to taste the nectar of literature but alas, it is served to them in a sieve, and they can do nothing but wait helplessly for another round. The rich diet of literature is laid on the table, but they are not sure which one is really meant for them, or which one will suit their system. They look up to the adults for telling them.

Children's books need to be selected by a taste seasoned by reading books for children, seasoned by the 'wonder' and 'desire to know' that the child readers so often have. It is not fair to consider children's literature as 'shallow', 'silly', 'unworthy of serious investigation'; or to associate it only with 'women who bear children and are close to them at home and in school and libraries'. We have to change our outlook and approach towards children, and as such towards literature, which they 'can' enjoy i.e. instead of threatening them with 'hell' if they do not behave in a certain way, they should be promised success if they 'do' behave in a certain way.

The librarians and teachers and also the scholars of English should be able to separate the wheat from the chaff by digging into simple children's literature and studying the theory behind it - the style, the language, the structures, and above all, the meaning it conveys. It should not be so difficult when helpful hints are available from previous critics. Sometimes the simplicity of children's books leaves the adults speechless.

The study of a good number of books produced in India (Chapter V : Language and Style) has made it clear that most of them are neither linguistically sound, nor do they have a flow in language, or lucidity of style, or richness in expressions which can make them readable and enjoyable. The choice of words is pathetically unsuitable.

The writer of anything needs a 'sense of language'. If he is born with any of the tools of his craft, I believe, it is this. Grammar can be taught, even level of diction can be taught. But a feeling for the rhythm of a language as it underlies and reinforces meaning is a difficult thing to explain to someone who does not have it.⁵

What children need in their books is bringing in a pure heart and intense feelings. There is always a magic in words when we 'use' them because at that time we deal with all those ideas which though unspoken, come to the reader's mind. According to Fredya Stark, as quoted by Margot Benary Isbet :

it is not what we actually say; it is what we make him think, that counts.

In order to do so one has to 'discover and re-discover' this magical quality of words. Margot Isbert has translated a poem by Lao-tse in German which records :

5. Jean Karl, "A Children's Editor Looks at Excellence in Children's Literature", The Horn Book Magazine, XLIII:1: February 1967, p.33.

to offer this priceless gift of all - the love for books.

Walter de la Mare once said :

To learn to love books and reading is one of
the very best things that can happen to any body.
So, too, with pictures and music, The longer you
care, the better it gets.⁷

Those who work with children and books cannot evade their responsibility which also happens to be their privilege. One may be a little frightened too, because words can be as 'powerful as atom', and it is words they are dealing with. Madeleine L'Engle says :

Words we never dreamed of, appear on page.
Developments we never anticipated are revealed
to us in the children we work with; and perhaps,
somehow or other, we have made contributions....
So we are given courage to begin, a new story,
a talk, a new day at school or in the library;
to open a book; to turn a key; to open a door,
to step out on to the open road.⁸

The object of true guidance is to stimulate, not to stifle the desire to read. Putting good books within a child's reach is one thing, and confining him rigidly to those which some one else has stamped with a seal of approval, is quite another. The former is necessary but the latter implies a lack of trust in the book and also in

7. Walter de la Mare, "Introduction to Tom Tiddle's Ground" as quoted by Leonard Clark; in "Poetry for the Youngest", The Horn Book Magazine, XXXVIII:6, December 1962, p.283.

8. Madeleine L'Engle, "The Key, The Door, The Road", The Horn Book Magazine, XL:3, June, 1964, p.287.

the child. The ideal situation is to pick up certain good books and leave the child to make his own choice.

The aim of this study is not to go into detail ? regarding criteria for reviewing children's literature but this can be a take off point for both evaluation of books and also for 'what' and 'how' to write in English for Indian children. And the best criterion for the selection of books can be :

Every book should be a work of art, a 'thing of beauty', aimed at permanency. But the children's book especially should be considered for its impact on the young mind - a conveyer of good taste, and of all the first things which are the ingredients of our culture and an antidote to the creeping horrors of our time.⁹

We have to go a long way - we, who care for books and for children. In order to make them love books in English we shall have to make them love this language. May be, if we "spank them with verbs, tickle and trick them with metaphor, delight them with alliteration..."¹⁰ and tell them a good story, we may bring them close to Disney's 'Dreamland' and Alice's 'Wonderland'.

Children are the best creation of God. They don't belong to a particular race or place; they belong to all.

9. Fritz Eichenberg, "The Education of an Artist", The Horn Book Magazine, 36:1, February 1960, p.25.

10. Glendon Swarthout, "Stories We Tell Ourselves", The Writer, January 1973, p.43.

They have converted this dull and dry world into a 'Valley of Flowers', and it is for the adults to see that they have their share in life, and that they flourish and blossom to perfection. If William Blake could

...see a world in a grain of sand
And a heaven in a wild flower,

children can also 'Hold Infinity in the palm' (of their hands), and 'Eternity in an hour', because they have, like poets, the power to imagine, to dream, and to be thrilled. Let us offer them opportunities. They are like kites.

You spend a life time trying to get them off the ground. You run with them until you are both breathless... they crash... they hit the roof top... you patch and comfort, adjust and teach. You watch them lifted by the wind and assure them that some day they'll fly. Finally they are airborne; they need more string, and you keep letting it out. But with each twist of the ball of twine, there is a sadness that goes with joy. The kite becomes more distant, and you know it won't be long before that beautiful creature will snap the life time that binds you together and will soar, as it is meant to soar, free and alone. Only then do you know that you did the job.¹¹

11. Erma Bombeck as quoted in The Reader's Digest, November 1980, p.87.

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